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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 5.5 million women employed in the public sector in 1995, compared with 4.5 million in 1980.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its workforce. In 1995, 85% of the public sector workforce were women, compared with 75% in 1980.

Another reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its senior management. In 1995, 35% of the public sector senior management were women, compared with 25% in 1980. This is a significant increase, and it suggests that the public sector is becoming more gender equal in its senior management.

A third reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in its part-time workforce. In 1995, 45% of the public sector part-time workforce were women, compared with 35% in 1980. This is a significant increase, and it suggests that the public sector is becoming more flexible in its employment arrangements.

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DEIGNTON FARM.



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BY
THOMAS BRADFIELD.



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DEIGNTON FARM.

A LOW-BUILT house, with walls as white as snow,
And deep straw thatch with antique gable ends,
Lies snugly bosomed in a pleasant dell
Near to the village Deighton. Shady elms
Stretch in a row before the quaint old farm ;
While round the windows honeysuckle twines,
And all about the door in summer days
The sweet clematis spreads its many flowers.
Nearly a furlong from the farm-yard gate
There flows the river, broad and noble here ;
It sweeps some three miles on through sloping fields,
And then the sea. A vast and lonely moor
Rears its grim headlands someway to the east,
And all along the misty sky at dawn
Are to be seen the distant tors that rise

Like phantoms on the verge of some great sea.
The village Deignton is a comely place ;
As you look down into the cosy vale,
Between the trees that intertwine, you see
The neat white cottages that nestle there,
In peaceful beauty, with their trees and flowers.
When the road leaves the farm, it winds away
Up by the cottages unto the church,
A fine old building : ivy-covered tower,
Norman ; the arches of the doorway quaint,
And with fantastic heads grotesquely carved.

Ralph Trevor is the owner of the farm—
Though old and well-to-do, he still works on,
Scorning to live at ease. Simple and rough
In manner, loving well the old and tried,
Conservative in all his public views ;
Indeed, some rudely call him bigoted ;
Hasty in temper, dogged when opposed,
Merry, good-natured, generous to a fault,
When not put out or ruffled ; yet in his heart
There's a deep well of tender love for all—

The sick, the poor, the fallen, these he helps,
And opens readily his door to them.

Marian, the farmer's only girl, grew up
With her three brothers in the quaint old house.
About her is a natural loveliness
As of the heather bloom that sweetly grows
Upon the moorland seen against the sky ;
The gentle light of her soft violet eyes
Seems lovelier than the chalice of that flower
When full of dew ; her long wild clustering hair
Hangs round her features in a deep-brown wreath.
Quick, eager, and impetuous in her ways,
A soul to shock conventionalities,
And overthrow the alabaster walls
In which our dainty spirits hem themselves :
To tell us with the quick rush of a stream,—
These are your natural boundaries, these hills
These glowing miracles of earth and sky.
Some two and twenty years had passed away,
And of her childhood many a tale was told ;
How one night, when a wild and fearful storm

Came driving o'er the land, and through the trees
Betimes a weird and shivering music sent,
As the impulsive winds swept here and there,
They thought of Marian, who was not with them,
But in vain searched to find her in the house.
Then forth to look for her the sturdy boys
And the good farmer went ; till by the banks
Of a swift stream they found the little girl,
Sitting upon a rude and moss-bound stump,
Listing unto the mighty waters dash
Over the stones, and leap from piece to piece,
While overhead the flashes of the light
Only awoke a wonder in her eyes.
When questioned : she her way had lost that night
The storm came on, and by the swollen stream,
Beneath some trees that sheltered her a bit,
She thought she'd wait until it was o'erpast.
Now, as of old, she'd wander far away—
Down to the sea, and sitting on the beach
Would watch the waves break in for hours together.
At other times she would unto the moor,

And with her apron full of yellow gorse
Or heather bloom, slowly return at night.
She loved to wander in the woods, and sing
The old and curious ballads she had learnt ;
And often in the eve a full rich voice
From the trees near the house might be o'erheard,
As she strolled there to watch the rising moon
Come up behind the leaves, and silver them.

Upon the hill, a little from the church,
Lived Squire Sapworth ; kind and affable,
Yet very foolish in so many things
That mirth was often made of his odd ways.
A busy-body, with sufficient mind
To make his meddling felt, yet not enough
To make it useful ; but withal a man
Who had so many good parts that the folk
Liked him, although he was so full of whims.
He was not more than eight-and-thirty now,
His face as smooth as any child's of ten ;
So that a jesting villager observed,
One evening at the inn, that he was like

That will do presently—who is the girl ?”

“ One you like well,—none else than Trevor’s lass.”

“ What, Marian Trevor ! she is but a child.

Only the other day she wore short frocks ;

’Tis not a great while since she learnt to walk.”

“ P’rhaps not a great while when compared to you.”

“ What does she know of keeping house, and all

The ways of a domestic life ? ” “ You, Deb,

Will teach her soon, and put her in the way.”

“ Not I ; I’ll have no meddling with a chit,

Who’ll override me in the smallest thing.”

“ Nay, Debby ; when the little missis comes,

Don’t think she’ll take the reins away from you.

Upon the marriage morn I’ll give you twice,—

Aye, twice the sum I do. Now, take a glass—

A good strong glass of grog ; ’twill soothe you, Deb,

You’re not quite well to-night. I’m off to bed.”

On the next day the squire walked across

To Trevor’s farm. A little from the house

He saw the farmer and his sturdy sons ;

They all were coming out. “ Good morning, sir,”

Glancing about him at the farm-yard walls ;

“ I wonder, Trevor, that you never made

A door towards the road, and that the shed

Within your yard was not upon this side.”

“ Dear me,” said Hickory, the youngest boy,

A red-haired youth with broad, good-humoured face

And merry eyes ; “ dear me ! you always have

A basket of advice upon your back.”

“ True, Hicky ; but few profit by the store.

Come, Farmer, let me have a word with you.”

Here Sapworth laid his hand upon the arm

Of the stout farmer, and they walked aside.

“ You know I’m well-to-do ; a large-sized house

And goodly lands around it. Well, I want

A wife ; you know I’m all alone up there.”

“ Ha !” said the farmer, “ and a good want too.

I always like a man the better, sir,

When he is married ; so I’ve said before.”

“ I know you have ; to make the matter short,

I’ve come to ask you for your daughter’s hand.”

“ What, Marian ? daughter Marian, my own girl,

Or be ye joking?" "Not at all; I mean
That I'll make Marian any time you please
My wife, if you'll consent to it." "I say!
Here, Hicky, Stephen, Michael, come here quick;
Come here, I say; hurry, don't be so slow."
Then the three lads came hastening quickly up.
"Here's news for you; why, Squire Sapworth's come
To say he'll marry Marian if we like."
The brothers looked at one another, then
The eldest said, "She is a good girl, sir."
Stephen assented; Hicky followed up:
"I always thought you had a good heart, Squire;
A good eye for a bargain too, and this
Is p'rhaps the very best you ever made."
"Yes, think of it," the old man went on quick;
"But we must come inside, and tell the girl.
Or would you like to do it all alone,—
Eh, Squire?" "No, friend; you'd better come as well."
They left the road, and passing thro' the gate
Came to the orchard; then beneath the leaves
Into the garden full of sunlit flowers.

The cottage-porch was arched with creepers wild
That now were budding. Upon either side
Were roses blossoming, that seemed to smile
Upon the suitor as he walked along.
Marian was out. The farmer thought she'd gone
Into the village. "Ha ! she's coming now ;
She'll not be long, for I can see her hat
Over the hedges in the lane above.
What will ye take ? Come, Stephen, draw us quick
A flagon of our harvest brew—'tis prime."
The lad returned, bearing the vaunted draught,
Which was as rare October as the mouths
Of thirsty yeomen could desire. Just then
Came Marian running in ; her morning gown
Of lilac pattern, and a white straw hat ;
A bunch of fresh primroses in her hand.
"You want me, father ?" Seeing there the squire,
She shook hands warmly, and then turned again
Unto the farmer. "Sit ye down, my dear ;
We have some weighty matter to discuss."
"With me ?" asked Marian with enquiring glance ;

What can it be?" "You had best tell her, Squire."

"Well, Marian dear, the tale is briefly told.

I've asked the farmer if he would consent

To let you marry me, and so I've come

To beg you'll bless me with your heart and hand."

The girl, with half-perplexed and wondering look,

Gazed first at him and then at the three boys,

Then at her smiling father ; and replied :

"I'm sorry, sir, I cannot marry you.

There're many reasons in the way to it—

I do not love you, and in fact have ne'er

Thought of you in that way, or any other,

Except my father's friend ; you must know well

I cannot marry one I do not love."

The words were spoken quickly, without pause,

And with a confidence that did not brook

To be opposed. The group was all surprised.

"I never thought of that," the farmer said ;

"I do not want to force you, dear, but still

The squire is well-to-do and kind at heart ;

Perhaps you'd like to think it over, lass."

"Father, I do not want to think a bit ;
I trust you will not take my words amiss,
But still I cannot alter what I've said."
"I'm sorry for it, but we must not press
The lassie, now at least." "No, father, no ;"
Here Hickory broke in ; his mouth was full.
A loaf that on the table had been left
Since breakfast time, had found its way to him,
And now was on its journey down his throat.
"No, father ; though the squire and I be friends,
He knows I mean no ill when I declare
The girl's decided ; he must do without her."
"Aye, aye," said the old man ; "that's right, that's right.
We're friends of course, just as we were before.
Fill up the flagon, Hicky, and let's drink
Squire Sapworth's health ; we feel your kindness, sir,
And here's good luck to you and yours for aye."
The farmer took a deep draught of the ale ;
Hicky then finished what was left of it,
And said, "God bless you, better luck next time."
"I'm sorry, Trevor, Marian has declined

To marry me, but I am getting on ;
Just forty now, it's what we must expect.
Of course the lass," and here he stroked her hair
In playful way, "likes the young fellows best."
So Sapworth went. When Deborah enquired
And learnt the story, she declared : "'twas true
That those who acted foolishly were oft
Rewarded in a way that served them right."

II.

Now Deighton living had changed hands of late,
And the new vicar was a genial man
Of quiet kindly ways, with some repute
At Oxford for his learning; and his wife,
A fine and showy woman of the world,
Fond of exciting life and busy scenes,
Was withal kind and loving in her heart.
Their eldest daughter, Jane, resembled her.
But the next child e'er since her earliest hours
Had been most delicate; nigh thirty years
Had passed away, and still her tender life

Hung as a dew-drop on a white rose leaf,
Which the next breath might gently bear away.
Her father had once wished her to be named
Dora ; but more romantic in her ways,
The mother said, " Let's call her Lilian, dear ;"
And Lilian she was called. So the third child
Came to be christened Dora—a bright girl
With rosy cheeks and lovely bluebell eyes,
And full of laughter all the livelong day.
The rector with his younger girls had come
To call on Trevor. The old farmer now
Welcomed them heartily. " I trust, my friends,
Ye like the country : for the land is good,
And there are hereabouts some lovely spots
Where the young ladies can stroll to and work ;
My daughter Marian knows them all by heart.
Take the young ladies round the farm, my dear,
While I and Vicar Lee converse a bit.
You'll try my cider ? 'tis a rare good drink.
Here, Hicky, you go with the ladies ; see
The dogs are all tied up ;—quite harmless, sir,

Only they bark and follow one about.

A fine boy Hicky, he is for the mill ;

You know I have the mill two miles up stream."

Marian and Lilian had walked on before,
While Hicky followed, with Miss Dora Lee.

"These are my bees, you see," he said to her,

As they approached some six or seven hives.

"That's how I catch the flies," he followed up,

Pointing unto a case ;—"you see that glass?

We strew some rotten peaches down below,

A little hole lets in the flies up there ;

They can't get out again, but die inside."

"How cruel !" said Dora. "Cruel, you call it, eh?

You'd have the fruit all spoilt except for that.

Yonder's a scarecrow ; well, I used to stick

Old clothes and hats upon the pole, until

The labourers in the village stole them off ;

And once at church I met a culprit clothed

Just as the scarecrow was the day before."

Marian had taken Lilian round a walk

Where roses grew, and mignonette, and pinks

In lovely riot. "On the other side,"
Said Lilian, "is a bower, with honeysuckle
Growing all over it, just like they train
The fruitful vines of Southern Italy."
"Have you been there, then?" Marian quickly asked.
"Oh, yes, three years; not all at one place, though:
I went there for my health. Oh, how you'd like
To wander by the blue waves, and by night
Linger beside the banks of some fair stream!"
"I should; but why, what makes you think I should?"
"Well, because you are wild and fanciful,
Fond of long rambles in the loveliest parts."
"Who told you so?" "Why, Squire Sapworth did;
He told us how you love to stroll about.
He seems to like you very much." "Oh, yes,
He does. Come, Hicky, open this large gate,
And keep these rude pigs from Miss Lee; they're fine,
But very ill-bred thus to follow us.
These turkeys, too, are good." Then they strolled round,
Back to the house. "You've been some time, my dears,"
The vicar said; "Farmer and I have done

Our business quicker far than you have yours.

You'll come up soon unto the vicarage ? ”

He said, turning to Marian now ; “ I'm sure

'Twill give us pleasure if you'll often come.”

Squire Sapworth in the evening called to chat

With Trevor as to what he really thought

About the vicar. “ He's a good man, sir,

And one that's likely to unfold sound Truth.

No flummery, but wholesome doctrine, sir ;

That's the man I like ; he's the right stuff, sir.”

“ Yes,” then said Sapworth ; “ what a charming group

The daughters with their mother form ! They'll be

Delightful friends for Marian.” “ Yes, Squire, yes ;

But that thin one does not look long for earth.”

“ Ah ! she is very weak.” Hicky declared

He thought the other was a little gem ;

And bright and sparkling as a butterfly.

“ So full of fun ; I never saw a girl

Laugh so enchantingly.”

So Marian went

Often to see her friends, and there grew up

A love between her and the three fair girls,
Which strengthened ever as the days flew by.
Lilian she loved the best ; was somehow drawn
Towards her by a gentle sympathy :
For Lilian's life hung by a slender thread.
It had been always so ; she never seemed
To have belonged to earth ; her thoughts were e'er
Wand'ring in fancies, or, with some loved book,
Beholding fairy visions of the mind.
For all the sweetest singers of the earth,
The fancy troubadours of these late times,
Were her most constant friends ; the fields of light,
The dreams of beauty, that they sang to her,
Made a true world around that fervent soul.
You would have said, to see those calm deep eyes,
They were entranced with something you saw not.
The old harp rustles to each gentle touch,
Though the sweet music answers but to one ;
So Lilian in her life could make the dreams
Which all have read reality to her.
She never thought to stay here very long :

In earliest years she'd lain for months nigh dead ;
The young soul mounted eagerly above,
And wandered with the deathless throng on high.
When she grew stronger, still the same thoughts rose ;
Now joyously she strolled in woods and fields,
The songs of poets still her constant themes—
She read them as a lover reads the words
That whisper bliss. And Marian loved her friend.
Being fanciful, yet with a healthy wish,
A natural craving for real joy and life,
The hot and passionate spirit of the girl
Found a sweet soothing in her friend's discourse ;
Her own existence flowed more as a stream
That dashes over rocks, but in the end
Reaches the sweet calm of the peaceful vales.
Joyous their walks on many a summer day ;
By the rude sea they'd wander where the cliffs
Gave them romantic nooks to prattle in ;
Or in some charming glade Lilian would read
Unto her friend the fancies that she loved.

Sapworth had staying at his house a friend,

Son of a wealthy merchant in the north.
Harcourt had early learnt to use his brush,
And, after leaving Oxford, went abroad ;
Spent two years studying art in Italy ;
And then went on to Greece for several months,
“ Viewing,” he said, “ the beautiful remains
Of deathless genius ;” came back here to win
His way by laying pigments cunningly,
And clothing the fine fancies of his mind
In the rich vesture that his colours wove.
He took life in an easy lolling way ;
Was fond of pleasure, if not profligate ;
Admired all intellectual greatness, yet
Had a fine eye for more substantial things.
“ The beautiful and good were one, no doubt,
But why not too the pleasant and the good ?
Genius was all divine in Homer’s verse,
Stirring the souls of thousands, shedding light
Over the antique world ; but now-a-day
The golden pieces are more to the point.
The intellect of Plato on Exchange

Would not affect the funds ; and Raphael's brush
In these hard times less useful than the one
The plasterer works with." So he wildly talked ;
Praising his art, yet saying 'twas a lure.
Men wanted money, luxuries, to make
This life roll by on the ethereal wheels
Of joy. "'Twas made to get through, I suppose ;
We're children in the dark about all else.
I cannot see the good of living lone
Ascetic lives, and pinching one's soft tastes
When here we may have velvet to lie on,
And sip the rosy draughts of luxury
From bowls of gold ;" and then would come a laugh,
A little silvery laugh, that used to give
His thin pale features a peculiar light.
The quick gay mind thus flashed o'er many things
In an alluring fascinating way ;
Although the views one did not care to praise,
His manner pleased. Harcourt was staying now
With Sapworth, sketching scenes about the place.
He went once with him to the vicarage,

And wanted to paint Dora's sunny face.
"She'd make a charming Flora, with a wreath
Of roses on her brow, a basket full
Of pinks and mignonette upon her arm.
But I suppose the parson would object ?"
"I will not ask him ; you can, if you like.
Next week we have a picnic on the moor ;
If you stop, you can come and try your charms,
And see if the young lady will consent."
"I've nothing better there to do," he said,
Referring to his father's ; so he stopped.

It was a lovely morning, one that seemed
To have burst out of heaven upon the world ;
One that would tend to make you feel as though
A new life had come o'er you. The old earth
Wore her most gorgeous trappings ; now you looked
First at the sky, then at the mighty sun,
Then at the trees, hills, houses,—everything—
All with the splendour of the morning crowned.

They were a merry party in those lanes,
Light-hearted as the world. Hicky drove first

The farmer's chaise, and Sapworth's gig with four
Trundelled behind the parson's country trap.

The little party, merry as a troop
Of fire-flies in the deep light of the moon,
Sat round the viands spread upon the turf.

Harcourt was sitting near to Vicar Lee,
And Marian on his other side. Lee said :

" You've often been in these parts, I suppose ? "

" Not often ; I prefer more sprightly nooks ;

Sapworth lives like a mole." " And you like what ? "

" Oh, like a gaily plumaged bird that loves

To sport in the fair sun, and show its hues.

I pass some days, weeks, months at dreary work,

Hard toiling for the bread of human life ;

Then for a few days yield myself to dreams,

Indulge the fancies that I cannot paint.

Or, after months of London's tawdry life,

Go to the city of the violet crown,

And worship art ; live the old life of Greece,

See how the world was in its lusty youth,

Lament that I was born in these sad times."

“What would you have to make life better then?”

“Freedom; no man is free who has to work
Both day and night for what he hopes may bring it.”

“But still your work is of the nicest kind;
It should not be a task.” “That’s very well;

It’s work, hard work to me; I cannot dash
A picture off like Rubens; even he
Must have toiled many a year before the skill
Of such consummate workmanship was his.

I used to think that writing poetry
Was easy till I saw great Dante’s face
Growing lean o’er his grand and marvellous work.

In Milan there’s Da Vinci’s masterpiece;
It took him twelve years, and the finest part
Had doubtless cost him all his previous life.

Why, every torso in the Vatican
Has been, I doubt not, sworn at for the toil
It cost the sculptor.” “Oh, I cannot think,”

Said Marian, “that a true-souled artist views
The work he loves so in that common way.

He loves it, yes, it is to him divine.

The fancy that was dear unto his soul,
That he has cherished, has now burst its bars ;
And in its beauty he beholds it there,
Embodied by the skill his hands have won.”
“ All very well,” he laughingly replied ;
“ That’s the idea of those who only see
The work when finished ; view it when his skill,
After long hours, has perfected the thought.
I love this fine bold scene ; those giant stones
Rising against the clear sky, and the light
That plays upon the golden-tinted bloom.
But if I had to sit from day to day,
Sketching and painting, faith ! it would then seem
Less sweet and luring,—don’t you think it would ? ”
“ Well,” Marian said, “ I love to look for hours
Upon a scene that’s fair. I love the sea,
And never tire of watching its blue waves.”
“ The sea, the sea ; there’s nothing like to that,
Sublime and restless, crushing down the foot
That treads its path : now rising at its will,
And dashing the strong vessel on the rock,

Or drawing it into its secret depths.
While gently, as a mother holds her child,
It lays the tinted shell upon the beach,
And ripples o'er the sand with a coy smile.
Sometimes black, hideous, in the wintry storm ;
At others with a path of trembling gold,
As if an angel from the ethereal world
Had flown above, and gently left the hues
Of his pure wings upon the placid deep.
I meant to paint it, not as artists paint
Half of their picture headlands, ships, and buoys ;
But nothing save the wild and lonely sea,
Not e'en a sea-gull should be flying near.
Only the endless waters with their crown
Of shadowy clouds." " Well, did you ever do it ?"
" No, I did not begin ; it was a dream.
I called upon a friend who keeps a yacht ;
' Lend me your vessel for a month,' I said ;
' Well, what to do ?' he asked ; ' To anchor out
In the Atlantic ocean, and there paint
The glorious sea. He laughed, and coolly said,

I was a fool ; and so the matter ended."

In twos and threes they wandered o'er the moor ;
Lilian and Marian laughing with the Squire,
At Harcourt talking earnestly to Lee,
With the intent of winning his consent
To paint his daughter. Dora gaily said,—
"I cannot sit five minutes in one place ;
If you can do it in that time, you may."
"Just like my ocean, I suppose," he said.
"Well, well, the fairest dreams are the most frail.
I never saw a face so full of bright
And merry beauty ; it recalls to me
Those charming features that Correggio
So loved to paint ; a sunny splendour blent
With gay and fascinating tenderness !"
"I think," said Lilian, "for sublimity
There's none like Raphael : his exquisite art
Seems to embody all that's high and pure."
"Yes ; but I love a man of greater soul,—
A grander genius, one that pierces, thrills,
Aye, terrifies,—an Æschylus of art :

A mind so mighty that it fiercely stirs,
And at last overwhelms one with its depth,
Its awful splendour, its Plutonian grasp."

And so the glad day passed in merry talk
And pleasant rambles over the wild moor ;
Until the setting sun, which gave a flush
Of loveliest red to heather bloom and gorse,
Told in its glowing language they must leave ;
And through the lanes they homeward went at last.
As Deighton came in sight, the opal hues
Of a full moon silvered the clustering trees,
And gave a pathos to the lovely spot ;
Like memory dwelling on a beauteous scene
Which long ago in happier hours we've viewed.

After a week's time Harcourt went away ;
They missed his bright and sunny company,
And only heard from Sapworth that he'd gone
Back to his father's house somewhere near York.

III.

“Ha, Kenneth ! back again, my lad ; you’ve grown
A splendid fellow. Marian, here’s our friend,
Our old friend Kenneth.” So the farmer spoke,
One autumn morning, to a fine strong man
Of five or six and twenty, who approached
The garden gate, with manly open face,
And grasped the farmer’s hand just like a vice.
“Yes, back again ; this time for good, thank God.
I’ve passed ; and now can practise, which I mean
To do of course. The old house on the cliff
Looked like a friend waiting to greet my form
As I rode over from the town last night.
I’m glad to see you, Farmer ; how’re the boys ?
Ha, Marian ! full of spirit as of yore ;
It does one good to see your rosy face.”
“Come in,” the farmer said, and forthwith took
His guest into the house. ’Twas Kenneth Grove,
Who lived upon the lonely cliff, four miles
From Deighton Farm ; his father, thrifty, left

A goodly heritage ; and now the son
Had just returned a doctor, having lived
More than five years alone at Edinburgh.

Often he came to see his old friends now,
And many a night spent at the cosy farm.
A week or two 'twas after his return,
Marian and Lilian strolled across the cliff,
And called on Kenneth, who was then at home,
And met them at the door. "Ha! glad to see
You both ; sit down, Miss Lee ; how are you now?
Maggie, let's have some tea." "What a grand view
You have from here! the sea is glorious."
"Yes, you should view it when the light is new,
And the old sun streams over yonder waste."
"Oh, I should love to wake up in the morn,"
Lilian broke out, "and gaze upon that sight,
And then to watch it on a still bright eve."
"Yes, it is splendid ; makes a worthy place,
A fitting temple for the soul of man.
I've just been reading an illiberal book
Upon the only church and creed that's true ;

A scene like this scatters such empty words
Unto the winds, and makes one think how sad
To stick such frippery about the soul.
These dogma-mongers take a truth of God
Much as my whelp a rat, and wriggle it,
Bend, twist, break, strangle out its very life,
Munch flesh and bone ; then leave the mangled bits,
Thinking it is the same as God gave out."

"O Kenneth ! don't ; you're talking wildly now."

"Well, Marian, I forgot ; Miss Lee, you know
I did not mean to shock you with my speech."

"Oh, no, but don't you think there's one true church?"

"I cannot say ; I never held for that.

I go among the poor, and they're all sorts.

Well, I tell them not to mind any sect ;

That all are comrades in the same great fight ;

That love and charity, that doing good,

Are plain to all, as if 'twere writ up high,

In letters of bright gold, upon the heavens ;

As so they are to them who've eyes to read.

It makes me wroth at times to see good folks

Cramping their natural feelings to do well,
Because of sects, or forms, or differences."

"But you must have some forms ; the Church gives us
The sweetest solace, the most precious aid,
Through its sublime and touching services ;
The wicked nature in us must be changed ;—
We come to Christ, and find relief and peace
Within the sweet bonds of His holy Church."

"Well, as to that, I cannot answer, Miss ;
God knows the element is strong within
That beats back good, and tries to slay at birth
Those fair deeds born of higher will than ours.
We struggle upwards with torn, bleeding feet ;
The way seems hard, and the world dark and cold ;
We know the beauty of pure noble life :
And were all things to fail, the one great fact,
That we had lived up to the highest thought
Our poor sad hearts had known, even if death
Were end of all, would be the sweetest balm
For the dark gnawing sorrows of this life."

"Yes, that is very true ; but we're so weak,

How can we do e'en in the least what's right,
Except His Spirit guide and strengthen us?"

" Well, if I see a man bent on the end
Of doing all he in his heart believes,
I say he's God's true servant ; what his creed,
It matters not a midge-gnat unto me.
Ha ! Maggie, that's right, bring the tea along.
My Maggie, like a horse that's driven home,
Has put her best foot forward ; now sit down ;
Draw your chairs up, and don't be bashful here.
I love those best who make themselves at home."

The autumn now was fading, and the year
Grew dark and stormy with the passing weeks.
One fearful night the wind was set dead north,
Sweeping above the cliff, right down the vale,
With mighty gusts. Old Trevor sat beside
His cheerful hearth, and smiled at that fierce strength.
While sitting thus a tap was heard without ;
Hicky arose, opened the door, and saw
Kenneth with two poor wanderers. " Come here !
These wretched things are wet through, nearly drowned ;

I saw them crouching by the farm-yard wall.
Good God, it blows across the lonely cliff
Like the strong breath of a half a dozen fiends.
Come in, my friends, come in," Kenneth went on ;
"The farmer here will give you warmth and food."
"Come in," said Trevor ; "come close to the fire :
I would not turn a dog away to-night.
Marian, some wine ; here, Kenneth, take a seat ;
Hicky will give you half his bed to-night."
"No, Farmer, thanks ; it's very kind of you,
But I'm off soon ; I've work to do abroad,
There's danger too about the point to-night."
He clasped the farmer's hand : "Give me a draught
Of your old ale ; there's no October, sir,
That I like more ; next to the sea, I think
I'd sooner swim a mile in that than aught.
Ah ! Farmer, there're two things I want to mend ;
One's old Dame Grimble's thatch ; the other, well—
The other's this cursed law that cruelly grips
A woman's blanket when she's poor and ill."
"The thatch I'll manage, Kenneth, but the law

You'd best not meddle with." "My blood ran cold
The other night; I walked into a house
Upon our cliff, and found a dying lass,
Not more than twenty, and three little bairns
Shivering with hunger, cold, and misery.
There were two louts taking away her goods;
I almost clutched them by the throat in rage.
'Good God!' I cried; 'what are you doing here?'
'Oh, we are officers; two quarters' rent
And more is due.' 'Look here,' I said, 'lay down—
Lay down those things you hold!'—well, I was wroth—
'Or else I'll maim you both,—law or no law.
What's the amount?' 'Some six pounds odd,' they said.
'Well, Kenneth Grove will pay you; get along.'"
"The old, old story," Farmer Trevor said;
"How came she thus?" "Why, married to a wretch
Who leaves her without means to live or die.
But I'm off now; send the man with the straw
To-morrow, if you can. I'll help him thatch."
So he went out into the furious night,
A four mile walk before him; threading on

Round by the cottages to see to those
He knew were ill. "Ah! Kenneth Grove," one said,
Who knew him well, and had been helped by him,
"Has sat by dying folks far oftener
Than has the parson; and can speak a word
Of tender comfort when a soul is sad."

There was an old and shattered house, hid deep
'Mid shrubs and trees, down in the little dell
Beneath the Vicarage. 'Twas all alone,
And in it lived a woman and her daughter.
The latter was a strange and violent girl,
Who led a rambling life for months away
From the old crone; then suddenly she'd come
Back to the house, and stay awhile; and then
Would disappear for many a long, long week.
Sometimes at night loud fearful shrieks were heard
In the lone spot; and many tales were told
How, long ago, the father had gone off
In a strange way, and ne'er been heard of more;
How the two sons were reckless, drunken fellows,

Who had been known to poach, aye, even thief.
When Lilian came to Deighton, she had sought
The mother out, and Marian went with her.
The woman was not pleased with this at first,
But changed in time ; the presents that they brought
Smoothing the way. The daughter, too, was cold,
Sullen, and cross ; but after a few weeks
She used to talk with them, and at last came
Unto the church. They brought the old dame work,
And this and other kindness moved the pair.

The time passed on, and Rachel Crewherne grew
More settled in her ways, went out to work.
Once, when they came unto the lonely house,
Rachel was singing a sweet mournful air ;
Half dreamily she looked out on the trees,
As though not heeding what she sang. They heard
These words come softly through the lattice frame :—

“ The willow is bathing
Its limbs in the wave,
While the cypress is kissing
A maiden's lone grave.

“The gold of the ripple
Caresses its leaves ;
But unheeded the cypress
Its green garland weaves.

“The hot sun has risen—
No ripple is there ;
And lonely the willow
Droops in the dry air.

“But the cypress stands still
Near the white marble tomb ;
Waves sadly its branches
In silence and gloom.

“So the love of the heart
Is bright, and will die ;
While sorrow will linger
As the sad hours fly.”

They entered then, and Rachel was surprised.

“Where did you learn that sweet song?” Lilian asked.

“I don’t know, Miss; I heard it long ago.

Whether the winds upon some lonely night

Told it to me, I know not ; I have songs,

And I forget how first they came to me.

I think the wind makes music in my ear ;

Often I listen as it whistles by,
And think I know all that it means to say.
The sweet flowers sing to it, and then the woods
Store it with message, and it comes to me,
In this old cottage, through the myrtle bush,
And lays its burden at my feet by night."

The mother, who in former times was cross
And passionate, so that she often struck
And even drove her daughter from the house,
Now seldom spoke to her, and the two lived
Quietly and sadly there. The winter came,
And Lilian was for many a bitter day
A prisoner to the house ; she could not brook
The bleak winds of the time : a lily fair,
That only flourishes in summer light.
One night the vicar sat beside his fire,
Reading to those he loved, when suddenly
A shriek came from the dell below, a shriek
As of a fury torn with awful pain.
He started, rose to go ; Lilian, who then
Was sleeping by the fire, woke up. Again !

The shriek, louder this time—more terrible.
The girl jumped up, and said, "That's Rachel's voice!
I know it is; what can it mean?" and then
Again 'twas heard, only this time less loud.
Lilian dashed from the room, and soon came down
With shawl and hat. The vicar looked amazed:
"I must come, father—oh, do let me come."
"It's very cold to-night, and it might prove
Your death-blow, child." "Oh, father, worse to me
To remain here; I must come—'tis not far;
We'll call for Marian: oh, I want to come."
In vain to reason: wrapped in a thick cloak,
She went out with her father through the lanes.
Marian was at their gate with Hickory,
Ready to start, for she had heard the shrieks.
When Lilian came, she tried to make her stay;
But no, the frail girl would go on; and soon
They reached the cottage. There a fearful scene!
Rachel was lying on the floor, held down
By two strong yeomen; her pale features torn
With passion and revenge; the long black hair

Was streaming wildly round her angry face.
Her mother lay behind on a low couch—
The woman's face haggard and smeared with blood ;
A deep wound in her arm. As they came in,
Rachel shrieked out, " Don't come near me, I say !
Oh, go ! Oh, leave me ! I am mad !—yes, mad !
She made me so ; taunted and struck me, then
I struck her back ; but I was mad, I was."
" How was all this ? " the vicar asked of them,
As the girls went up to the wounded crone.
" Oh," said a countryman, " fighting again ;
They're never long without a row ; her head's
Gone wrong this time, and when they got to blows
The young one thrust a knife into her arm,
And then we came." Hicky ran quickly off
To find the doctor ; meanwhile Lee bound up,
With Marian's aid, the old dame's wounded arm.
Rachel was tied ; for still her mind was gone :
She raved awhile, then sunk into a sleep.
The doctor said he would see to the girl,
And Marian stayed to pass the night with them :

But Lilian went back home : the frail weak form
Received a chill which shook her terribly.

A cold set in, and the pale, thoughtful face
Grew thin and thinner. Lee went off to town,
And saw a maiden sister, who was then
Upon the point of starting for the South.

It was arranged that Lilian should set out,
And spend a year or so with her abroad.

"Oh, Marian, if you could but come with me
It would be charming." "But I cannot, dear."
"Try to come out and spend a few weeks soon."

"I cannot say; but you will write to me,
And I shall view the lovely scenery
In your sweet letters." "I shall often write,
And dream away the time, and long, and long
To see you and the dear old place once more."

So Lilian went; and the dark winter-time
Glided but drearily away. Kenneth came
At times to see her; but his days were full,
And he enthusiastic in the work
To which he'd set his mind, toiling so hard

To help and strengthen those who were bereft,
And, like a pure and fragrant atmosphere,
Making their lives the sweeter for his aid.

Trevor had had the gout, and grumbled much;
But when his lass would read the Word at night,
He calmly prayed around the family hearth
To bear his pain with patience; so the year
Glided away, and soon the wintry months
Passed into spring, when the young earth arose,
And donned once more its varied loveliness.

IV.

'Twas nearly May when one exquisite eve
Marian strolled to the wood. She was alone;
And as she walked along a tall thin form
With a great bag was coming through the lanes.
'Twas an old man with long white flowing hair
That hung around a thin expressive face,
On which a smile was ever lingering.
“ Ah, dear Miss Trevor, how are you to-day?
I know you care not for the elephants;

The time is past since you were wont to love
My crocodiles, giraffes, and ostriches,
Though I've a whole bag full of them here now."
'Twas the old toyman ; in a little shop
His cunning hand carved out the various shapes
Which he thus christened. Marian, laughing, said,
" No, Farley ; how's your daughter ? " " Very well.
Old trees, Miss Trevor, stand alone the best ;
But old men, Miss, like saplings, want support.
She's very good ; the light of my old days."
" Well, good-bye, Farley ; how is it you're late ? "
" A turnip cannot peel itself, nor yet
A man of years run like a mighty horse.
You laugh, my dear ; wait till you're seventy-two."
" Good-bye, now, Farley ; call at the farm-house,
And have a glass of cyder." " Thank you, Miss ;
'Twill act like whipcord, send me home quite smart."

Marian went on, her soul stirred by the eve ;
The spring-tide loveliness awoke within
The music of old times ; the breathing May
Gave a soft fragrance to the tender air,

And fitted well her mood. Her mind went back
To Lilian, and the hours that they had passed
In that same place ; she sat there dreamily,
And a strange melancholy saddened her.
Slowly the evening deepened, and the trees
In the dusk rustled with the passing wind ;
A pale star here and there was seen above.
She sat some time ; the tide of memories
Sweeping across her soul, when suddenly
She heard a low voice singing near to her,—

“ In the lily so white dwells a fay,
Who nestles there fondly both night and day ;

“ While the sunbeams kiss it each morn,
And the evening dews its bosom adorn.

“ The moon throws o’er it a veil of light,
Silvering the fay and lily so white.

“ The fragrance of many a beauteous flower
Hangs sweetly around it at sunset’s hour.

“ A melody comes from a golden lyre,
And breathes into it its soul of fire.

“ A star falls in love with the dainty sprite,
And smiles on it fondly many a night.

“ But, alas ! the star has vanished away,
And all is gloom for the weeping fay.”

So the words rose ; they lingered in the air,
And seemed to melt away among the leaves.
There was about them an unearthly tone,
As though they floated from another world
Down to the earth, and then went back again.
Marian turned round ; did she not know that voice ?
Where had she heard it ? Then she rose and looked,
And saw, not far away, a crouching form.
When she advanced, it started, shrunk away
(As a dog shrinks from one it fears will strike),
Then gave a quick glad cry, and ran to her.
’Twas Rachel Crewherne—the pale, trembling girl
Hid her face in the maiden’s lap, and sobbed.
Crying, she threw her arms round Marian’s neck :
“ I’m right again ; don’t be afraid of me.
I would not harm you,—no, nor any one ;
It’s only when I’m mad, and know no bounds.”
“ Don’t talk like that. I do not think you would,
And indeed pity you ; where have you been

Since that sad night?" "Where have I been? ah, where?
A fearful time indeed, and one I think
That would have turned me mad, ere long, had I
Not grown so callous and hard-souled. Why, Miss,
I'm driven to steal—to filch from hedge and tree
What things are there, that I may not drop down
Senseless from want of food. I am so weak
That sometimes I feel faint, and cannot move.
Why should I thus be cruelly visited?
Have I done aught that God should brand my life,
So that the foulest beast is better off?
I know I have been wicked, but before
I was a marked, ill-treated, stricken wretch.
When I was young, my father drove me forth;
I should have died but for a tender heart—
A lady who was kind and generous
For nigh a year. She died, and I came home,
My brothers, ever drunk, beat me at times,
And mother, too, was often cruel and hard.
The doctor took me after that sad night
Unto a mad asylum, where I lived

As if in hell,—they were all mad, of course ;
But soon my fever left, and back again
My reason came. I wished to leave the place ;—
It was not prudent for me to be free,
Because I had no friends, no soul on earth
Who would take care of me. Well, three months passed,
And life became unbearable ; shut up
More like a felon than a stricken being ;
At last, my ways giving me liberty,
One dusky night I fled away, escaped !
How could I, then, clothed in an idiot's gown,
Seek for some work ? I fled away for miles ;
Having turned inside out the hated dress,
And stolen from a hedge this woollen cloak,
I got my food for weeks by asking scraps ;
And so I've lived until at last my steps
Have led me here. I do not care for life ;
Only to die an outcast without word
Of comfort, hope, as to that other life,
It haunts me, makes me tremble in the night
So that I fear to move." Rachel here paused,

A

And wept for some time lying on the ground,
Till Marian raised her up. "Poor child ! ere long,
Let's hope that you will find life is more sweet.
You must come home with me ; there's lots of work,
When you are strong, in which you can assist."
" But, Miss, the farmer, he is stern, you know."
" Oh, he'll not mind when I have told him all."
The trembling outcast threw her long thin arms
With passionate force round Marian's neck, and sobbed ;
Sobbed as a child, that wandering from the way
Has lost her mother, finds herself once more
On the loved bosom, yields unto her tears.
Thus Rachel stayed for some time at the farm ;
Her worn thin face grew ruddy with the glow
Of health and strength ; she seemed a nobler soul
As the pale, wretched aspect of her cheeks
Passed, and a calm, impressive sweetness came.
The rent made in her life by misery
Closed, and the flowers of hope grew in its place.
She loved to wander here and there at times,
Singing the melodies she knew by heart.

But in the village they all shunned the girl,
And foolish, thoughtless fellows laughed at her ;
Talked of the time when she was wild and ill.
But Rachel never seemed to hear their words,
But wandered on without a glance or turn.

Now Stephen lately had caused pain at home,
And Trevor tried to break him, as he would
A young colt in the field ; for every kick
He was resolved to make the reins more tight.
The lad was headstrong, full of hasty wrath,
Yet easy to be led ; when things went wrong,
He lost all self-control, and did not care
What he might do. He was not quick as Mike,
And often made mistakes upon the farm.
One day Mike found him tearing up some land
That should have lain, and spoke to him of it ;
Stephen heard sullenly, and went on still,
Muttering that Mike was not his master yet.
Mike turned away, went to the yard, and there
Finding his father, told him of the fault.
Trevor was angry ; went across to Steve :—

“Why do you meddle here? Mike told you not.”
“What’s Mike to do with it?” “Why, everything ;
He knows as well as me what should be done.
Take the team off, and don’t touch it again.
None but a pumpkin-headed dolt would plough
A field like this.” The old man went away,
Stephen obeyed, and soon slouched off the farm,
And stroll’d some three miles to a neighbouring place,
Where he fell in with friends ; and drank with them.
But, in the evening, wishing to go back,
They kept him still. Not loth in his dark mood,
He stayed there late, drank too much, and came home
Reeling and stupid. Marian sat with Mike
Waiting his coming ; when they heard his step,
Marian arose and opened the side-door.
Steve staggered in, looked blankly at the two,
And with an oath strode up into his room.
This was the first of Stephen’s drunken bouts ;
Next morning Trevor sharply questioned him
Why he was late. “ Oh, I was at a friend’s,”
Was all he got from him. Trevor was vexed,

And did not speak another word all day.
When tea was over, Stephen took his hat,
And went out of the house towards the road.
Marian then hastened quickly after him,
Walked down the garden-path, and gently said,
“Don’t go, dear Stephen, where you went last night.”
“All right, all right ; now don’t come bothering me.”
“Stephen, I want a walk if you will wait.”
She ran in swiftly here, and soon returned,
Tying her bonnet as she walked along.
They wandered by the river ; as they went,
Stephen grew less reserved, and when they turned
Towards the house, had lost his sullenness.
But often now he left his work betimes,
Having grown fond of a low tavern set,
To which he went when aught was wrong or cross.
The habit grew ; the evil symptom spread ;
Trevor could never send him to the town
But that he stayed away till late at night,
Returning often in a drunken state.
So the year passed ; the farmer grieving much,

Feeling ashamed of Stephen's wanton ways ;
And vexed that he could not break in the lad.
One evening Marian took her work, and sat
Out in the garden, while the farmer smoked
And drank his ale. "I wish to God," he said,
"That Stephen would reform. I'd give a year
Of my old life to see him what he was."
"O father, Stephen will do so, I'm sure.
Somehow the farming does not suit him well ;
He's moody when you mark his stupid faults ;
I think he would be better if he had
Another occupation." "What, girl, what !
You don't mean that the rascal wants to leave
The old place, eh ? leave me and Mike and you !"
"Well, father, if he had some other work,
He would be more at ease, I know." "At ease !
The rascal ought to thank his lucky stars
He has a farm like this to work upon ;
He'd be as stupid in another place :
Geese are not changed to swans by placing them
In water, lass. Well, if he goes—he goes,

But not with my consent."

At the same time

The village inn was full of labourers.

Stephen was seated with a ragged youth,

And drawling out at times some short remarks

When Kenneth entered. "Is Wat Cooper here?

Ha! there you are; go home at once, my friend;

There's your poor wife near dying, and you here,

Drinking as leisurely as if all's well."

Wat hurried off, looking ashamed and cross.

Kenneth continued: "Better for you all

If you drank less, and minded more the wife."

"Come, come," said one, "when work is over, sir,

A man must have his beer." "Yes, have his beer;

But that's not staying here drinking all night,

Wasting your time and health and money too."

"One likes to have a smoke and chat as well;

He can't be always sitting in the house."

So said the landlord, vexed at Kenneth's words;

"I'd like to know who'd live if you came here

Wanting to turn my customers away."

"Stop, friend," said Kenneth ; " I want all to live,
Not merely one ; and that's what makes me speak.
Why, Stephen ! you here too ? hid behind there,
I did not see you. How's the farmer, eh ?
I'm going there ; you'd best walk home with me."

They went out from the inn together then,
And in the lane Kenneth took Stephen's arm.
"Don't go too much there, Steve ; you won't mind me,
I've known you long enough to speak out plain.
Don't go there more : for it's a sad way, friend ;
I know the old man's very hurt at it."
"Well, what do I care ? father minds not me.
The fact is, Kenneth, I hate working here.
Father will keep me to it, though I die ;
If I had money, I'd be off to-night."
"Yes ; the old man's ambitious for you two
To have the farm." "He is ; Hick's at the mill.
I wish I'd gone to Oldmouth, then I might
Keep clear and straight ; but what with father's words
And my own discontent, I'm going bad."
"Keep up a good heart, Steve ; don't give in yet.

If you get better, perhaps he will relent."

"Not he, not he—he'd think he'd broke me in ;

He treats me worse than any dog, he does."

They now were by the gate, and Trevor saw

The two approaching. "Kenneth, how are you ?

I'm glad to see you—wish that every son

Was half as good or wise as you, my lad."

"They'd be poor fools if they weren't better, sir."

"At least, you don't disgrace your kith and kin ;

You don't bring shame to your old father's heart."

"'Twas warm to-day," Kenneth remarked, to turn

The farmer's mind ; but, no ; Old Trevor now

Had meant to speak ; the floodgates opened thus :

"There's some, my lad, that stick out late of night

At lousy inns, and come home beastly drunk."

Marian looked up, and Stephen struck his fist

Hard on the table, saying, "I'm the man.

Speak to my face ; I'm whom you mean, you know."

"Yes, that you are ; and God forgive me, sir,

I feel ashamed to look you in the face.

You, my own blood, you bear my name ; why, Mike

And Hick are worth a score of you at least,
You idle, skulking fellow. Look, last night ;
I sent him to the market : he came back——”
“ Father, you must not,” Marian broke in here ;
And Mike and Kenneth having led Steve out,
The old man fuming, held his peace at last.
Marian came close beside her father’s chair,
And threw her arms around his neck, and kissed
The old man’s face, until at last he said,
“ I’m sorry, lass, I spoke so fierce. Ah, well,
I love him as I love you all ; there, dear,
Don’t stay with me ; I’d be alone a bit.”
The time went on, but Stephen mended not ;
Old Trevor seldom spoke to him at all.
In spring, one evening, he had sauntered out,
Down to the inn, and there a row ensued,
In which the youth got somehow mixed. There came
Just at the time the farmer in his gig
Along the road ; who, seeing Stephen there,
Dashed up to him, and drew the staggering boy
Along with him. A fearful burst of rage

Followed this scene when Trevor reached his home ;
And he and Stephen parted in great wrath.
For all that Marian tried, he would go out,
Having grown reckless, caring not at all.
Once would he listen to her, but not now.

One night, when all was lovely, all so still,
That the sweet peace of heaven seemed to have come
With softening beauty on this world of ours,
Marian was sitting watching the pale moon
Gliding along the fields of shadowy cloud.

Trevor came home in an excited rage :

“ I want that Stephen ; why, he left his work
At three o'clock, and did not finish it.”

The old man leant himself against the wall :

“ When he comes in, I'll let him know my mind.”

“ O father,” Marian said, “ don't speak to-night.”

“ Not speak to-night ! I will, though, when he comes,

A lazy, skulking hound ! the fellow shan't

Come in again. That's twice this week he's left

His work ; I'll turn him out of house, I will.

He drives me mad. He wants to leave the farm,

By God, he shall ! and leave for good to-night.

Tell him I say he no more enters here."

" But, father," Mike exclaimed, " he's got the trap."

" What, got the trap ! my trap ? why, where's he gone ? "

" I think he's gone to Lowton." " With my trap !

And yet you never said a word to me.

Tell Bob at once he must wait up for it.

Damn him ! I'll see how long this is to last.

Shut up the place ; don't gape at me like that !

He'll never more come in my house I swear."

No, never more ! for, lying cold and dead

Upon the road, was Stephen Trevor then.

v.

Three months have passed since Stephen met his end,

Driving that night along the country road,

When, headlong thrown upon the stony ground,

His skull was fractured ; for the horse had dashed

Against a wall, through Stephen's recklessness.

Yes, three months now ; and near the churchyard gate

A simple stone marks where his body lies ;

And often Marian sits beside the spot,
Shuddering at times as she recalls that night—
The long, long waiting, and at last the news ;
The ghastly scene when home the corpse was brought
Just as the dawn with cold grey light arose.

The summer now has passed, the autumn comes,
With russet beauty, pouring its glad wealth,
Like an indulgent mother, o'er the earth.

Marian one afternoon was picking fruit,
And helping gather the rich orchard's store ;
Her gown tied up, her sleeves rolled carelessly
To let her arms have freedom. Flushed with work,
She held the basket, and was filling it
With rosy apples ; singing now and then
Snatches of song ; when on the long green turf
Was heard a step, and then the graceful form
Of Sydney Harcourt 'mid the trees appeared,
“ You see, I've come again unto these parts.
Sapworth would have me spend a week or two
This autumn with him, and the country's fair.”
“ Yes, that it is,” said Marian ; “ all think so.

You've found me at my usual autumn work."

Marian half wished her sleeves were not turned up,
And that the loopings of her dress were down:

"It suits you well ; a charming little sketch
Might be made out of this delightful scene.
The loaded trees, showing the hills beyond,
That graceful basket with the rosy fruit,
And you among the leaves, with such bright cheeks."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Harcourt, that your art
Leads you to fancy what does not exist,
And makes you picture scenes as they appear
When you have painted them." "Oh, no, indeed ;
That would but mar the simple loveliness
Of a sweet hour like this." Marian jumped down,
And quickly said, "I've wall-fruit now to pick,
It's over ripe ; would you like to come too ?
Father and Mike will be an hour or more,
Or you will find them in the lower fields."
"I'd rather come and see you pick the fruit ;
Perhaps I may win a peach as my desert."
They strolled along through the old orchard trees

Into the garden where the wall-fruit grew.
"I think," said Marian, "that's a splendid peach ;
"You'll find it ripe and juicy." "That I shall ;
Outside, how soft and roseate ! with a hue
That your fair lips somehow have stolen thence.
I cannot bite it ; it would be as though
My lips were pressing something sweeter far."
"I am afraid you'll never eat much fruit
If you're so foolish." A deep blush had spread
Over her face ; and as she raised her eyes
A soft light broke into her glowing look,
When she said quickly, "Here's a nectarine then ;
It has a better flavour than the peach,
Although it's not so pretty nor so soft."
"I'll eat that, then ; but, see, we'll cut it thus :
You must have half ; pledge me as in a cup ;
The luscious juice must be our wine to-day."
"I think the nectarine might be proud of that."
"Ah, so do I ; not every day such lips
As yours are wont to kiss its gentle bloom."
Then they went on ; and Marian picked the fruit,

Until they sat down for awhile to rest.

"Now let me," Harcourt said, "pluck you some flowers."

He went towards the roses ; gathered some,

And wreathed them with the jasmine's snowy stars.

"Thanks, they are beautiful ; I'd rather hold

Them as I do, than have them in my hair."

Trevor was heard coming along the path.

They rose to meet him ; Harcourt did not stay,

But promised to come down and see them soon.

The first sweet sense of love had gently crept
Within her heart ; those soft and flattering words

Made her soul thrill, as oft and oft she heard
Again that voice speaking with tender warmth.

She went in when his steps had died away,

Still feeling as if he were standing there,

And saw her blushes. Over her there crept,

Ever again, with new delicious force,

The subtle joy that filled her beating heart :

Then she would blush, and laugh, she knew not why.

In a short time her hat was on her head,

And through the lanes she bounded without thought.

And, as she went, leaping betimes ; and now
Running awhile, as if to keep up pace
With the swift thoughts within. At last she came
Down to the beach ; the sea was rippling in,
With the rich hues of a fine autumn eve
Over its trembling waves. There never seemed
A grander evening ; she sat down and watched
The long bright ocean stretching far away
To the deep fringe of gold that now illumed
Its waves upon one side. Again the thrill
Of budding love went through her soul ; again
She lived those moments o'er ; it was a dream
That must soon vanish ;—it could not be real.
Too restless to sit long, she bounded off
Along the pebbles in her ecstasy ;
When suddenly a hearty voice was heard
Crying, “ Well, what’s the matter ? Goodness me,
You must be dazed ; or is it only joy
To be out on this fine and noble night ? ”
“ O Kenneth ! how you frightened me ! ” she said.
“ Why, Marian, you are flushed ; I never saw

So rich a colour on those lovely cheeks ;
And your eyes glow with eager happiness.”
“Nay, Kenneth, you are turning flatterer,
I have been walking fast ; it’s glorious
To wander wildly on, just as we like,
Not caring where we go.” “Yes, that it is ;
To come down here, and muse away an hour,
I find is soothing ; we’ve to work and do,
But energy, like life, must be sustained.
The body flags even before the mind
With those who’ve great aims in this world of ours.
Well, we won’t think of that ; let’s wander on,
As if there were no thought, and nothing here
Could for a moment mar our youthfulness.”
So they walked on along the pebbly beach,
Silent for some time, until Marian said,
“You must be lonely, living on that cliff ;
For there’s no one within two miles of you,
Except the villagers and fishermen.”
“Well, yes, at times ; but then I’m used to it,
And Byron says ‘it is not solitude

To sit on rocks, and muse o'er flood and fell ;'
My strength, hope, comfort, from within are drawn."
"Yes, Kenneth ; you seem firm and self-contained,
No visions mock you with delusive charms."
"Indeed ; but, Marian, I have dreams enough,
I doubt not, that would fret me were they gone.
There's one that ever since I can recall
Your features, I have cherished tenderly ;
I've felt it was a dream—a dream to think
That you might be my own ; that sweetest thought
Has been to me more than the highest hope,
More than my life itself." He spoke so low
That Marian bent her head to catch the words.
Turning a little pale, she took his hand.
"O Kenneth, I would give the world to make
You happy, for I know how good and kind
You are to all." She stopped a moment then,
And, looking up into his earnest face,
That was now lighted with an eager hope,
Said quickly, "Don't be vexed with me ; I know
Your love is something very beautiful,

Something beyond any poor worth of mine ;
But if for you"—again she paused a bit—
" I feel not that great love you do for me,
It's not because I do not recognise
All your high soul ; but, Kenneth dear, you know
We cannot reason in such things as this.
There's no one in the world,"—and here she wept,
Hiding her face upon his hands. " Ah well,"
He said ; " I have been weak and foolish, dear.
You did not seem to love me ; yet at times
Would come the fond hope of a happy life
Passed with you here." " Kenneth, you know I feel
For you, and love you as a sister might ;
O let me be your friend and sister still."
" I will, dear Marian, and you shall never hear
Any more of this foolish dream of mine ;
'Twas as a flower we've gathered in the light,
And let perfume our room a day or two,
But soon there's nothing left but withered leaves."
He took her hand ; she turned her weeping eyes
Up to his gaze, and, as he pressed his lips

Upon that brow, she said, "Kenneth, I know
We shall be dearer friends for this henceforth."
And so along the shore they walked awhile,
The dark red hills now growing faint and dim
In the mist creeping o'er the silent land ;
While the low splashing sea still rippled in,
Making sad music in their thoughtful hearts,
Till the pale light of yonder moon arose,
Tipping each foam-white crest with silvery sheen ;
And all along the coast, the headlands gaunt,
And the long reach of cliffs that circled there,
And formed the bay, with many a jagged point
And verduous Combe, stood out and seemed to them
A shadowy land. Then Marian said, "'Tis time
That I was home ; I fear it's growing late ;
Father will wonder where I am to-night."
Slowly they walked back through the lanes, until
The farmhouse gate was reached ; then Kenneth said,
"I cannot come in now ; God bless you, dear."
"God bless you, Kenneth ; come and see us soon."

Marian met Harcourt next at Vicar Lee's.

Thither she went with Hicky ; found the squire
Talking to Jane and Dora, while the rest
Were in the garden. Kenneth came there, too,
A little later. Sydney in his way
Was talking eagerly when Marian came ;
He turned to her to settle a dispute.
“ Would you think that the influence of men
On one another more for ill than good ? ”
“ I don’t know, really.” “ Well, I hold it’s not ;
The Vicar stoutly advocates it is.”
“ Take the world through,” Lee quietly replied,
“ You’ll find more evil learnt by fellowship
Than there is good. Will you maintain that here
Virtue thrives best when there’s so much more sin ?
How can that be but the contagion spreads ?
‘ And still it holds,’ as Sophocles has sung,
‘ Base deeds by base are learnt and perfected.’ ”
“ There’s not so much of sin as you make out,
If I may parody La Rochefoucauld ;
Good things are best when there’s some evil in them.
Well, Marian will discuss that point with you ;

I see the farmer, and must go and meet him."

Then they walked on—silent at first, until
Sydney remarked, "The old church with its tower
And dim grey walls looks solemn in this light."

"Yes, very." "Rising on the hill, it seems
To stand out in such sharp relief against
The vast blue sky where changing hues now pass
Along it like a banner of the hosts,
Borne slowly by. Don't think I jest, but you—
You seem to me the spirit of this place."

"That's foolishness." "It would not be the same
Were you away. Should we e'en think,"—and here
He plucked a beauteous sprig of heliotrope,—

"Think this the same were its sweet scent away?"

"That's very different." "You are right; it is.

'Tis a poor image to express a thought
Worthy indeed of a much nobler form."

He looked half sadly, half perplexed, at her.

Turning, they walked towards the house, and there
Met Kenneth Grove. Sydney had seen him twice
Since his return. They sat down by the house,

Talking of various things, till Kenneth spoke
Of the new cottages he hoped to build
For some poor villagers. "I should have thought,"
Sydney remarked, "that these were good enough ;
They're better far than many in the north."
"But that's no reason 'gainst improving these.
The barbers still in Spain, as you perhaps know,
Bleed and cup folks—is that a reason, then,
We should so here ?" "But still you may reform
Until you go too far." "There's little fear ;
Such good designs are oftener stranded high
Upon the bleak coast of contempt and wrong."
"I think enthusiasts are quite as bad
As those who will not move ; they've too much heart,
Go in for feeling with a want of bounds,
That brings their good schemes into ridicule."
"I suppose then you'd tell Almighty God
How He should fashion us—all stomach, eh ?
Or, like the kangaroo, with a large pouch
For gold and silver. No, give me the heart
That feels and loves, and beats with passionate warmth

For all the children of this earth ; that throbs
For every sorrow, misery, that comes
Unto the laden spirit in its life."

" You'd find enough to do with such a heart ;
And as for love "—he spoke half bitterly—
" I think with Rochefoucauld, whom, by-the-bye,
I'm very fond of quoting, it's a spectre
Which many talk about, but few have seen."

" O sir, you're half in jest ; you treat your thoughts
As the man does his monkeys at the fair,
Making them turn, twist, jump, and play about
In any postures but their natural ones."

" I don't know ; there's more truth in that remark
Than you may deem ; for, after all, what's love ?
A mere illusion ; why, Spinoza states
That 'love is blending pleasure with the one
Whom we may cherish,'—what can be more true ?
I have not many theories ; my life's plain :
I cull the flowers, and to those leave the thorns
Whose tastes they are ; the rosy laughing dew
I love to sip, not ocean's brine——" " But stop,"

Said Kenneth, "whither leads this path of flowers?"

"Ah, now I see you want to sermonize.

I don't discuss the absolute; 'tis vain—

Philosophy is as sand in one's mouth.

I love the poets, that 'royal race of men;'

'The poets who on earth have made us heirs

Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays;'

The mighty souls that threw such glowing fire

Into the tragic dramas of old Greece.

Give me for friends the Roman satirists—

Gay, witty Martial; Horace, the refined;

Warm, beautiful Catullus; Juvenal,—

The stern, the fierce, the terrible to scorn."

"To Marian and myself such realms are closed;

We cannot share your antique luxuries."

"Well, try some modern—gay Boccaccio;

Keen-thinking Montaigne; Chaucer, racy wit;

Or coarse but jolly Rabelais. These I read,

And find the pithiest sayers of good things."

"I love the earth and all its glorious scenes

Far more than the sweet music of the poem,"

Was Marian's quick reply ; to which he said,
" Oh, it is beautiful to wander on,
Lost in the mazes of a fancy world.
It takes one from this greedy, working life,
With all its strivings after what is vain."
" Its strivings after what is vain !—no, no !"
Said Kenneth ; " you must slay such reptile thoughts.
Learn to see that your life is holy, great,
And that there's nothing finer in this world
Than a man who believes in noble truths,
And makes his life harmonious with his faith."
" That's beyond me ; feeling, religion, faith—
These are the food which pale fanatics love,
The baseless visions of emotional man."
Kenneth turned round, and placing his strong hand
On Harcourt's shoulder, with a laugh exclaimed,
" Well, that will do ; excuse me if I say
You talk like Voltaire, but without the wit."

VI.

The days wore on, and Harcourt lingered there,
Working at sketches, taking long lone strolls
Over the moor, or down towards the sea ;
Spending his evenings at the Vicarage,
Or with the Trevors ; Sapworth asking them
In turn to visit him at the old Hall.
So the time passed, while autumn neared its close.
The sunsets still were grand, miraculous !
For, if you stood upon the well-known hill,
Near to the church, some fine September night,
You'd see the hills and valleys lying tranced—
Awed by the magic hues that on the folds
Of yonder giant curtain spread around,
All glory, shedding floods of purple, gold,
Over the moor, along its gorzy face,
Tinging the landscape that beneath you lay,
And giving to the river wave a flush.

On such an eve was Marian standing now,
Lost in delight and awe, when Harcourt came

Along the path and saw her ; the bright face
Was glowing with excitement, her whole soul
Stirred to its depths by that enchanting scene.

“ Ah this magnificence,” Harcourt exclaimed,
“ Suits you ; your features wear a loveliness
That makes you seem the sunrise of a truth,
More glorious than yon light that sets so fair.”

“ How mean you ? ” “ Well, I mean the mighty thought
Which lies beneath this wondrous firmament,
Is as a word which none knows how to spell.”

“ Yes, but we can ; indeed, indeed, our eyes
Have not been looking on such miracles
Without discerning the great truths they teach.”

“ That may be so : you, as your features tell,
Seem to look far beyond the sky or light.
But I, I’ve never gone beyond the thought
Of the slight pleasure I feel in my soul.”

“ Kenneth once taught me, from such noble scenes,
Not by his words, but by his sympathy,
To come to nature for the highest truths,
To learn to see creation as a whole ;

Not to forget when overwhelmed by care,
By gross necessities, they're but the filth
That the great wheel of being dashes off
As we roll on." "That may be so ; but I,
I'm ever led to face the mighty gloom
Which hangs around our life, cannot extract
Such gems of hope as your bright spirit does."
"Think you the inmost sanctuaries of light
Less fair than this their outward ornament?
I cannot think this is the loveliest dream
That we shall know, and I believe that all
Will be far happier in that other world."
He looked into her face—half sadly said,
"I wish I had your eyes. My life is e'en
As a chain broken; link by link has gone,
And what can piece it? Marian, you have looked
With a much larger inspiration here."
"I think not so ; you do yourself a wrong ;
I'm sure you do not mean one half you say."
"You may be right. My weak and fragile soul
Is like an egg-shell, that a touch will break.

I mean, this busy, hard, exacting life
Suits me but ill. I would not bind myself
Unto my father's trade, because I felt
It would have thinned, crushed, killed me in a month.
Then I chose art, and grumbled for six years,
While I was slowly mast'ring its routine.
Well, so it is. I want the means, the wealth
To lounge in the gay palaces of ease,
And to be ever kissing pleasure's lips.
I'm like ten thousand in this curious world,
Only I'm not ashamed to tell my wish.
It's what all want; the many are lured on
By the sweet music of the golden pieces,
And follow quick like sheep a tinkling bell."
"It's wrong," she said, "most wrong; work should not be
A hard grim task to which we're bound by force;
Work should be made harmonious with the life—
Should be the waves that bear us smiling on,
Not those that buffet, hinder, and o'erwhelm—
Should be the sunny blossom of our days,
From which we gather honey for our need,

While that its fragrance is our charm, delight."

"With this grand sunset right before our eyes,—
So grand, it seems as though the glorious light
Of that great realm were bursting through the clouds,
Making a flaming pathway to the gods,—
You cannot view the world despondently,
Cannot discern how, behind, grimly lurks
Ever the dark strange tragedy of life."

Then they walked on, and passed down by the church
Unto the wicket of the old farmhouse.

Now Harcourt was engaged : you must not think
He meant to idly win our Marian's love.

He came to Deighton ; saw the girl, and thought—

"I should be glad if Edith were like her.

Edith is pretty ; plays and sings, and knows
Somewhat of French and German ; but withal
A little same—she has no great ideas.

But Marian here is like a new-born flower,
Fragrant and lovely, full of rarest light ;
And then, she looks with a quick eagle glance
Into the heart of things. I shall be off ere long.

I'm fond of Edith—it has been arranged
For some time now—my father wishes it,
I shall be married by this time next year.”
Well, so he stayed, and came and came again.
As Marian's life unfolded to his view,
He thought at times : “ I half wish I were free,
But 'tis absurd, my family would rave
Should I be fool enough to mention it.”
“ Perhaps,” he thought, after one pleasant eve
Spent at the farm, “ something will happen yet;
Who knows what may not happen ere a year ?
If I were only master of my own,
Only had money, freedom to do aught,
I might then marry—well it's foolish thus
To think on things—I will be off at once—
To-morrow—yes, I'll pack up now, to-night.”
But still he stayed, and thought within himself,
“ Why should I marry Edith if I love
Some one much better ? Why should I be bound
I cannot help my feelings, if they will
That she and I must part—so let it be.”

Thus, ever lulling to repose the strength
Which lies in all to choose and follow good ;
Thus ever heaping on events the blame
Which lay in his own breast—not seeing how
He should have made his will conform to right.
Deed followed deed, and turned like angry beasts
Upon his life, and menaced his fair hopes.

One evening Marian, just come from a walk,
Was sitting in the bower near to the house,
Lost in a reverie of sweet fond thoughts,
When Rachel's voice was heard in the still air,
Singing as usual some quaint curious song :

“The maiden is seeking her flower,
With its fragrance so rare ;
She loves in the bright summer hour
To tend it with care.

“Why comes that chill wind on her cheek ?
Why does the bloom fade ?
Each evening the maiden shall seek
For it in the glade ;

“ But in vain, for there only the wind
Comes oft through the gloom,
And sings of a love that entwined
The heart of that bloom.”

‘ Rachel,” said Marian, “ have you any thought
Beyond the words you sing ; do you forecast
As it were sorrow, evil, that you chant
Such wild and ominous words ? ” “ Well, Miss, I think
When sorrow’s brooding, something in the soul
Tells us it’s coming ; true, we cannot know
The future, but instinctive feelings seem
Often to stir us.” “ But, dear Rachel, how ? ”
“ I cannot tell ; I sometimes think there’re words
In every breeze that moans about the house.”
“ I feel a chill come o’er me, and your song
Has saddened me. I cannot make it out ;
There’s something ghostly in the air to-night ;
Come, let us in. Why, Rachel, you’re quite pale !
Don’t be so foolish as to brood o’er themes
That thus unsettle you,—come, let us in.”

The next day after this, Sapworth had asked

The farmer and his daughter to the Hall ;
Harcourt was out ; he'd driven to a town
Some ten miles off, and did not come back home
Till it was late. Then Sapworth rallied him,
Saying how ungallant he was to go
When Trevor and his daughter would be there.
Sydney was pettish ; he had had that day
Two letters ; one from Edith, full of love,
But full of tender chiding for his stay ;
The other from his father, wrathful, stern ;
He wished his son to come back in a week.
Harcourt had not replied ; he felt himself
Compelled to pause, and think awhile o'er it.
He knew too well if he returned at once
His marriage soon with Edith would take place.
There still was time, something might yet arise ;
He'd wait a little ere he answered him,
And had gone off that day merely to rid
Himself of Marian ; had not meant to come
Back to the Squire's until they'd gone away.
A stronger force drew him unto the Hall,

And so he dallied once more with the flame.
On the next day he sat down at the desk,
And tried in vain to pen a fit reply ;
But every effort ended in a jerk,
With which he threw the unsuccessful words
Into the fire. Once more he tried,—in vain,
Dashed the pen down, and walked across the room ;
Then strolled out through the garden to the wood.
He sat down on a log, and tried for once
To look the stern facts in the face. “ O could
I but,” he murmured, “ tell him all, this time !
And let what happen may, for aught I care.”
He sat there musing ; after a few trials
Giving the task up hopelessly ; too vexed
Even to follow out the thread of thought
With which he had begun, and thus to see
Whither his deeds might lead him. Soon a step
Was heard upon the path—a quick firm tread,
And Marian hastened through the shadowy trees.
She blushed and started ; he rose quickly up,
And, without saying aught, held out his hand.

"I did not think that you would be here now,

In this cold wood, at such an early hour.

This is a lovely walk ; I gather here

Some of the dearest flowers that ever grew."

"It was not flowers that led me to this spot."

"You are not well—you're pale and melancholy."

"Am I?" he said: "to-day I leave this place,

I don't think I shall ever come back more."

"Never?" she said. "But why?" He turned sharp
round,

"Because—well, never mind—Fate, I suppose."

Marian looked down ; a few tears started out

From her bright eyes. "Good heavens! my darling,
don't,

Don't, Marian dear ; I love you very much."

He caught her quickly to his heart, and kissed

The pale wet cheeks. "I'll never leave you, dear ;

I did not mean to pain you." "Oh, I know,"

She murmured quickly. "Do you love me, dear?"

He asked ; and in a low, sweet, trembling voice

Came back the thrilling word he knew would come.

Well, the days fled, they knew not, cared not how.
Earth was ne'er lovelier, never so profuse
Of its enchanting flowers. What sweeter joy
Than to be resting in the woods with him
While sketching some delicious glade that seemed
A fitting place for fairies to meet in?
Woods, glens, and fields, the oft-frequented lanes,
The river and the glorious sea, were all
Bathed in the same rich mystic hues of love.
Love was the wild enchantress whose glad words
Transformed the world, and made its every scene
Sweet with a fragrance that was not of earth;
Rich with such splendour as our mortal eyes
Look on but once, when in that early flush
Of life's fair opening we too are entranced.

One night, it may have been about the hour
When the clear stars were just out in the sky,
Sydney and Marian in the rose-sweet garden
Wandered awhile, lost in a dream of love.
The mystic veil that hung o'er leaf and flower
Mingled with all their tender communings ;

And something in the night awoke at times
Deep music from the beating chords within ;
For hope and joy had swept their silver touch
Across the great Æolian harp of life,
But the same night when Sydney reached the Hall,
A furious letter from his father roused
At last the young man to a sense of right.
’Twas full of strong and angry adjectives :
“ Come back at once—or, if you don’t, by heaven !
I’ll disinherit you—this very week.
Why, zounds ! it’s more, aye more, than two months
since
You promised me to come.”

So Harcourt went.

Marian and he parted one afternoon :
“ I’m going,” said he, “ to see my father now ;
I must do so, but shall be back ere long.
You will not tell, dear Marian, any one
What I have said to you ? a little while
I shall return, and then we’ll tell them all.”
“ But, Sydney, may I not tell any one ? ”

"No, Marian ; if you do I shall be vexed.

Promise me that you will not say a word."

"Of course not, if you do not wish me to."

And so they parted ; as he walked away

He thought : "Something will surely happen yet.

I will refuse to marry for a year,

And in that time who knows what may occur?"

But Marian lingered by that spot some time.

It was so sad, after the long bright days,

To have to live even a little while

Without his glowing looks and tender speech.

Often his words would come like the soft notes

From some grand harp, touched lightly by a hand

That plays with feeling ; then the dreamy joys

Of those few weeks sprang up with memory,

And all her hopes seemed blended with that love.

Sydney went back, hoping to find some means

To put his marriage off, and then in time

Break through the bonds which bound him unto Edith.

But his old father was resolved. He met

His son with warmth ; but on an early day
Told him his mind, and said : “ It has, my son,
Been delayed now too long, and we must bring
This marriage on ; you’ll have ten thousand pounds
Settled on you the day she is your wife.”

Sydney declared he would not marry then :
He might though in a year ; but nothing now
Would make him. The old man was wroth, and swore
He’d disinherit him that very hour !

“ You trickster, what insidious plan is this ?
I’ll give a month, and not another hour.
There’s some one else, some other girl you want.
I’ll tie the money up, and not a groat
Will you get then, unless you marry Edith.
To play the fool with me for nigh three years ;
To dally with the girl, and make me seem
An ass before her father and the world !
Another month I’ll give you, but that’s all.
So let me hear no more of this mad freak.”
And thus they parted. “ Curse my evil fate ! ”
He muttered ; “ I must marry her, it seems.

Poor Marian ! would to God I had not gone
Like a moth fluttering near the cursed flame !
This is the end of all my precious hopes.
Who would have thought he would have been so quick
To guess the reason why I want delay ?
Well, it's a bore." He strolled into the park,
Lighting his cigarette, then tossed about
The chestnuts he picked up upon the ground.

Meanwhile the days for Marian passed along
With a dull sameness that was worse than pain ;
She almost wished that she had never loved—
It was so different from what she had thought.
It made her cross and fretful ; Hicky stared
One night to hear her answer peevishly ;
And Trevor said he thought the lassie ill.
With Rachel Marian knew a small relief.
Somehow the young girl felt a sympathy,
Binding her still more strongly to the soul
That had known sorrow in so many forms.

One afternoon, some two months from the time
That Sydney had departed, Marian stood

Within the dairy, churning busily.

It had been long and bitter the whole time ;

Not one short note from Sydney had there come.

She tried to reason down her doubtful thoughts ;

But it was painful waiting day by day,

In hopes of something, and as yet no news.

Well, on this afternoon she worked away,

Rachel beside her, skimming the fresh milk.

The neat, trim dairy had a charming view ;

It looked out on the orchard and the fields.

Sapworth and Hicky were heard by-and-by,

Talking as they came by the orchard path :

“ Ha, ha ! ” said Hicky ; “ that’s a good thought too.

But, Squire, you seem in all your plans so slow ;

Just like our lame mare in the paddock yon.”

“ Yes, yes,” he laughed ; “ and your head, worthy friend,

Is like our old man Teddy Farley’s bag,

Full of the queerest shapes. But I have news.

You know young Harcourt, who stayed twice with me ? ”

“ Of course I do ; he was down here enough :

I’ve often wondered what’s become of him.”

“ Well, he is married.” “ Married is he, though !
The deuce he is ! I am surprised at that.”
“ Yes, married to an heiress in the North,
A month ago. He kept it very dark.”
Then they walked on, their voices dying out,
Leaving poor Marian with the fatal words
Ringing like some grim sentence in her ears.
She turned as pale as death, and then rushed out—
Out of the house, and down the lanes, until,
Within the old wood, she could weep alone.
Her grief was terrible ; she moaned and sobbed
For some time, till at last her anguished mind
Began to wander to the past, and weave
That dream again, and see it in the light
That those few words made it appear to her ;
The true light too. Then she took up the threads,
And went through all the bitter memories
That crowded in upon her broken heart.
Sapworth’s last words seemed then the key to all,
And fretted in her mind. An heiress, too !
Yes, he had married then for merely wealth ;

That was the lure, that the enticing bribe
Which made him lower, viler than a slave.
Had he come there and won her love to while
Away a summer's visit ? or to boast
How a poor girl was blinded by the snare ?
Or was it that the tide of interest bore
Him from her side ? It came to the same end ;
He cared not whether she were blessed or not,
He must have all the luxuries of life.
An heiress ! Ah ! there lay the evil spell.
She did not love him for his gold or land,
And that he should be base enough to fall
Down to that level, made her clearly see
How low she'd sunk in loving such a thing.

Then her head drooped, and slowly she leant down
On the damp grass, with its thin withered leaves.
Her grief burst out afresh, it would not stop,
And she lay wildly sobbing on the earth,
Clutching the broken memories that rose
Into her mind, yet dashing them away.
This was the love that dreamers oft had sung ;

This around which they'd wreathed such sunny flowers;
This the delicious prize that men so sought.
Oft had the poet bitterly denounced
The woman that was frail ; but what was he ?
Yes, what was he, who weighed the worth of love
In money's value, struck the balance so,
That the deep feelings of a loving girl
Were but as dust compared with what he hoped
To make by taking to himself another ?
Then she lay still awhile ; a stifling sense
That something terrible had come to pass,
Crept o'er her with a dull and gloomy force.
Could it be true ? yes, it was all too plain.
In her heart there had been stored up such love—
His love ; she'd laid it with the reverence
Of worship ; there it was to lie embalmed
Like costly fragrance in a marble vase,
Sweetening her life, giving out richest scent
Through every year ; and now this was the end !
It shook her whole faith in the world and life ;
This false man's lie made her think all indeed

Was but deception ; when she looked around,
The very sunshine seemed to wear a hue
Different this hour. The clear light of the day
Was blurred and chill ; a curse seemed suddenly
To have descended on the beauteous earth.
God pardon her, if bitterness had made
The mind unjust ; but, trampled on and crushed,
Her joys beat out of her, 'twas well her mind
Had energy at all to vent itself.

VII.

The new year opens with a chill, keen blast
That drives the snow across the little dell,
And heaps it in curved masses by the homes.
The "Swan " is bright and cheerful on this eve,
The winter cold drawing the villagers
Around the cosy hearth : there's Sexton Dan ;
For forty and more years he's held the post,
And still is tough and lithesome as a bough.
There's Scratch, the keeper of the medley shop,
A shrewd quick fellow, not to be outdone

By any man within a score of miles.
There's Watty Stone, a hearty jovial soul,
And a good carpenter as e'er was born.
Old Davy Thudge, who used to drive the mail,
Until he gave it up unto his son.
And Farley the old toyman, too, is there.
A cheerful fire sets off the cosy room ;
Outside are snow and sleet, the cold bleak wind
Is heard now howling round the little inn.
" Dear me," said Thudge, " my lad has got a drive
Over the moor as will be rather bleak."
" Young blood can bear it, sir," Scratch coolly said,
Filling his pipe, and giving a sharp kick
Into the grate to put the coals together.
" Yes, young blood can, but 't isn't nice for it."
" No, that it ain't to-night," said Watty Stone ;
" I shouldn't like to be young Mister Grove,
These nights he's allays out looking about."
" And more fool for his pains," was Dan's remark.
" He's touched, I think ; who'd go out such a night
When they could sit beside a fire like this ?

His mind's like granny's cap, allays awry."

"No, no," quoth Davy; "not a bit of it.

You think a man because he faces cold

Must then be mad. I s'pose you wouldn't work

When it's a little chill. Well, I should ne'er

For nigh on fifty years have druv the mail

Were that my creed. It's dooty, dooty, sir;

There's them is born who'll do their dooty, sir;

There's them as, like a nasty-tempered horse,

Will kick and rear, and never do it, Dan.

They're not for me, I never followed them.

There's some, too, who is weak, and cannot do it;

They haven't got the strength; well, then, you see,

They must be pitied. It's your dooty, Dan,

To bury folks; well, if your wife were dead,

You'd have to bury her, like it or not."

"You wouldn't mind that much, now would you, Dan?"

Laughed Watty Stone. "That's neither here nor there,"

Old Davy Thudge went on. "Well, Kenneth Grove

Thinks it his dooty to be out at night,

And out he goes. Well, just the same with me;

If wet or dry, if hot or cold, I've drove
Them mails nigh twenty good miles every day."
"I suppose it was dooty when you druv
Your cart into the hedge, and broke the shaft?"
"Yes, Dan, 'twas dooty;" here the old man winked;
"For if I'd not been going a bit fast
To get the bags to Lowton all in time,
It wouldn't have happened; so you see, my friend,
'Twas dooty after all." "I think," Scratch said,
"Dooty or not, if young Grove likes to do it,
He may and can; for my part, I believe
That every man knows his own business best.
Let each one please himself, for that's my way."
"But, friend," said, Dan, "there's only one right way;
If a man goes his own when it is wrong,
What's to be done?" "But you must *know* it's wrong."
"Well s'pose you know it is, as stealing is?"
"You can't, you can't," old Davy put in here:
"As I've heard folks declare, there be two sures;
Them as is sure and right, and them, you know,
Who're sure and wrong. There be two sures, you see.

Well both is sure, and you can't tell the right."

"Why, there's the parson says there's but one way

To heaven; you won't go telling him, I think,

He don't know right; no more he'd come and say,

'Davy, you don't know how to drive a mail.'"

"But, Dan," said Scratch, "there's them that differ there.

Some don't think parsons allays knows the right;

At any rate, they doesn't allays do it."

"Stop, stop! that's blasphemy; nigh fifty years

I've been a sexton, and I never heard

But that the parsons knew the right of things;

Three parsons has been in the old church gate,

They allays spoke alike; it's blasphemy,

I cannot listen to such awful words."

"Of course, the parson knows," said Davy Thudge.

"Of course, of course," the landlord echoed here.

"Then Mister Phillpot," Scratch exclaimed at once,

"Why don't you follow what he says at times?

You goes to church alongside of your barrels."

This was an awkward thrust; the landlord frowned:

Scratch was a customer to be revered.

He put a smile on when the frown was gone :

" Why, look here, Mr. Scratch, I think with you

A man knows his own business best, so I

Know mine. I don't come meddling in your shop,

And telling you your trade." " Come, come," said Dan,

" You doesn't see as Davy said of dooty,

It's want of strength makes Phillpot stay away.

I know he'd come, but that it's want of strength ! "

" Ha, ha ! " laughed Watty ; " that I'll tell my men

When pay day comes : ' I can't pay you, my men,

It's only want of strength, as Davy says,

When one fails in his dooty, ' 'tis but want

Of strength." " Gibe as you may," says Dan,

" It's very true ; as Mister Grove, I'm sure,

Would tell you too. I wonder he don't marry ;

There's Trevor's lass would make him a good wife."

" Or p'rhaps," said Scratch, " Miss Lee would suit his
taste."

" The parson," Dan put in, " knows well as me

There's some one arter his Miss Jane all right."

" Who, Dan ? " " Aye, that's it ; ' who ? ' plenty can say

'Who? who?' but plenty can't say more; I know."

"No, only you, Dan," said the landlord here.

"Well, I know," rashly put in Watty Stone.

"Oh, yes, you do, you're like my pig, inspired;

If you're so wise, it's all right, then, I'm mum."

"Come, Dan, be neighbourly; come tell us, Dan,"

Broke from the various talkers of the group.

"I allays says the tongue is best when still."

"Is it young Trevor?" "What, young Trevor? no!

Nor yet the old one, so you're wrong again;

But there's one bit of news I will tell ye:

Miss Lilian's coming back this spring for good."

Farley here started, rose; his long white hair

Streaming behind him. "I remember well

The bright-faced darling coming in my shop,

Throwing a radiance over its bare walls

Just as the sun at morning. I'm so glad.

Miss Marian has been very lone of late,

Not at all well; there'll be two springs this year."

"Well, have another glass of whisky punch

To celebrate the good event, I'll stand,"

Watty cried out. Just then a knock was heard,
And the door opening, Kenneth came in quick.
He roughly shook the snow off, then sat down.
“A nice night for a walk, eh, Master Grove?”
Quoth Watty Stone. “A man of straw like you
Does well to hide his head inside the house.
I had the roof blown off my home to-day;
Must sleep at Farmer Trevor’s till it’s on.
I’ve just come from the place, and there it blows
Enough to shake the cliff from off the shore.”
“I thought you’d get it, sir, upon that point.
Come, sit down nearer,” Davy warmly said.
“When I was driving the old mail, I found
Nothing so good as whisky; many a night
I’ve faced it, sir, across the lonely moor.”
“Well, Davy, you are old, and at your time
A man should rest, but not when young and strong.
I have three patients who are racked with gout;
Their homes are poor, and the wind sweeps around
Enough to penetrate the smallest chink;
So I went over just to take some things.”

“ And very kind of you. Some whisky hot
Will do you good.” “ No, thank you, I’m off now.
Good-night, my friends. I want a light—that’s all.”
Kenneth went out, and walked towards the farm.
’Twas cold and dark ; the snow fell thickly still,
And over all, its calm white beauty lay.
He strode on fiercely as if warring hard
With some internal thoughts that bore along
His feelings, and would sway and master them.
“ Ah me ! ” he cried, “ I never should have thought
My love so great and strong ; I’ve grown morose ;
The more I work, the more the longing comes.
Tempted at times to leave this part awhile,
The ‘ great stone face ’ of duty ever says
No, weak men fail, rushing away from ills
That are within themselves ; I will stay here
And crush it out somehow, then perhaps ere long
I shall rise o’er this passion, and then drift
Into the tranquil waters of relief.”

Gloomy o’erhead, the night was not so dark
As Kenneth’s life seemed to him in that hour ;

Yet would he battle through it, never flinch ;
Not caring for the pleasure nor the pain,
So much as that high thought of how sublime
It is to rise above these passing ills.
The cheerful windows of the farmhouse gleamed
On him like beacons to a storm-tossed ship ;
And when he entered, the old farmer's voice
Bidding him change his clothes, was as the sound
Of buoyant life calling him back to hope.
The old farm room was cosy to a fault ;
The antique grate, where at least six might sit,
Glowed with huge logs that crackled merrily.
Hicky and Mike were playing bagatelle,
While Marian sat apart reading a book.

“ These lads here,” said the farmer, “ wish to have
This chimney altered, say it will catch fire
Because the beams are too exposed ; not it.
For fifty years I've known it thus ; and so
It shall be till I die.” “ I think with them
It's not quite safe.” “ Not safe ! you as well want
To have it down—to build another, eh ?

No, Kenneth no ; there could not be a better."

Then the old man leant back, and puffed away
In silence as his thoughts went gently back
Unto the days in youth he'd passed by it.

"You've heard," said Marian, "Lilian's coming back?"

"No : is she though ? you'll have your friend again.

I'm very glad of it." The farmer now
Had dozed a bit, and the two boys played on.

"I shall be glad, but somehow all has changed ;
How is it, Kenneth, you're so cold of late ?"

"Well, Marian, I am wretched ; that's the truth."

"Oh, so am I ; I never felt so ill ;

But, Kenneth, that should not estrange us two,
Rather in closer union bind our hearts."

"True, Marian, yet the bird with wounded breast
Feels pain when nestling even to its own.

I cannot bear your looks of sympathy."

"Ah ! Kenneth, did you know all I have felt,
How sad these months ; after that awful day
My spirit was crushed down and stunned with grief."

"'Twas sad indeed, dear Marian, I scarce know

How anything could have been worse for you."

"Oh, Kenneth, it is bitter in the mouth

Even to talk of it ; and then how great

Is the waste void that's ever in my heart,

Lying now cold and desolate in grief,

Where, if perchance a joy should come, it falls

With melancholy light, as the pale beams

Of a winter's moon upon the shivered walls,

The empty dwellings, of a ruined city.

I cannot think of others—all my thoughts

Go echoing through my own deserted soul.

I seem to dread the spring with light and flowers ;

For all will lie about my lonely path

With the sad memories that now keep alive

Those summer dreams that were not for this earth."

"Well, do not grieve, you must not brood o'er it ;

Hope and reliance in the great and good,

The never failing in this world's right work,

Must bring back life to its old ways and joys.

For flowers, you know, love ruins—sweetest herbs

Grow in the crannies of deserted walls."

One afternoon Marian was making' bread,
When Farley called, and asked to speak with her :
" I'm sorry, Miss, to trouble you, I'm sure ;
If you move one stone pretty safe, you know,
To stir another ; not that I mean, Miss,
As you're a stone, unless a precious stone,-
Then that you are. I heard some weeks ago,
Miss Lilian would be home about this time ;
Is that true, Miss?" " Yes, Farley, in three days."
" Well, that's how I did reckon ; for you see
I've got a little present which I'd like
To have put on her table ere she comes ;
So when she went upstairs it might be there.
I've got it now." He fumbled in his bag,
And soon brought out a work-box, neatly carved,
And prettily embossed. " I made it, Miss ;
My Charlotte sewed the satin lining in."
" But, Farley, wouldn't you prefer to wait,
And give it her yourself?" " Oh, dear no, Miss ;
Get it upon her table, that is best.
A thing that comes upon you by surprise

One feels the more ; just like a bowl of punch
Is allays welcomest when least expected."
"I'll do it, Farley. Come, sit down a bit ;
I'll get some things for Charlotte." "Thank you,
Miss.

I say to Charlotte, Though we are alone,
There's every one about that's kind to us——
Well, thank you, Miss ; your cheese is very rich,
And there's no butter equals yours in flavour.
God bless you ; may the time come soon, when toys
Will please your little ones as they have you."

VIII.

Lilian came back stronger than when she left,
A healthier hue upon the pallid face.
The spring was fresh and warm, and so she went
Often with Marian through the leafy woods,
Talking to her of all the pleasant scenes
That she had spent the last two years among.

Soon after, Sapworth and Jane Lee were married.
This was the news which Sexton Dan had known,

And would not tell, upon that winter's night.
Debby, this time, appeared in moody state ;
Her reign was o'er ; the one dream of her mind,
The one romance of her quaint homely life
Was blighted. She had never loved the Squire,
And yet, somehow, it seemed her place and right
To marry him. She kissed Jane on the day
With a sharp feeling it was hard indeed
To have to do it. She was fond of her ;
The wrong that harassed her lay in the fact ;
And if she'd been a duchess—all the same,
Her mind would have resented the cruel slight.

One afternoon, unto the Vicarage
Hicky is wending his quick way betimes ;
Dora now meets him as he nears the gate.
“How do you do? Why, what's that curious box?
You don't mean, Hicky, that's your travelling case?”
“My travelling case! You're making fun of me.
Now if you guess what this is, you shall have it.”
“Which means that it's for me.” “Well, so it is ;
I made it for your birds ; it's large enough.

I wish," he added, as she came and looked
Into the cage, "a little bird I know
Would hop into it." "P'rhaps," she archly said,
"You would not let it out." "Not here at least ;
I'd take it to my home to sing to me."
"But, Hicky, what a curious bit of wood !"
"Oh, that's to clean their beaks on." Then they laughed,
Dora's bright smiling looks enchanting him,
That, like a fabled hero of old times,
He seemed enchained by her rich golden locks.
At last the honest fellow said to her :
"I know, dear Dora, I'm a clumsy chap,
More like a wooden barn than anything ;
But for all that, I love you very much,
And will do what I can to make you happy.
The little house down by the mill is mine,
Where the stream rushes brightly through the fields.
We should be cosy there. O Dora dear,
I think you love me." "Well, then, after all,"
The young girl said, her arms placed gently now
About his neck, "your cage is to hold me.

I like the cottage, for the roses grow
So beautifully about it, Hicky dear."
"We'll try and be so happy there," he said,
Kissing her rosy lips.

A week from this
They both went up to see her sister Jane.
As they strolled on they spoke of Deborah.
"Debby's a good soul, but too prim for me.
Why, I declare she scolded me an hour
For crumpling her old cap while kissing her.
I said she should not wear one when I came,
Or take it off to kiss me. How she frowned !
I did not know till then her head was bald.
Jane says she keeps the key of an old room
In which are some preserves, and won't allow
Any to use them. Sapworth humours her ;
For, as he says, she is a good old soul.
And then her pickles ! how she spices them,
And scolds you if you think they are too hot :
I vexed her once by making a wry face
Over some gherkins." "Well, I tell you what,

If she had married Sapworth, the old Hall
Would have been spoilt." "Yes, that it would ; the
blinds

Would have been something horrid. Oh, her taste !

Those curtains in the drawing-room *were* odd.

Such gaudy-coloured chintzes for the chairs !

She's excellent in kitchen things—a child

In any others. Here we are at last,

And there she is with Jane ; don't laugh—oh, don't ;

Now, Hicky, if you do, 'twill be a shame."

But Debby soon went in, having inquired

How Mister Grove was, who had been so ill.

"He's better now," said Hicky. "I was there

At least a week with him ; the house was damp

After the roofing ; but he's better now."

This afternoon Lilian was at the farm ;

The last week had been glad, for the two girls

Wandered about together. Lilian saw

Something had happened, but the sad wild tale

Was never told, though Marian knew she felt

As if it had been all outpoured to her.

The maiden's old impulsive temperament
Led her to rush into extremes—one day
Not caring to see any one ; and then
Upon another she'd go out betimes,
And not return till night, having been round
And seen some half a dozen friends or more.
Kenneth had now been three or four weeks ill ;
This troubled her ; she missed his earnest help ;
His buoyant nature seemed to dash away
That sense of sinking which would fill her heart.
He always spoke so warmly, lovingly ;
Had grown more tender : there were depths of love
In that great soul she had not fathomed yet.
She looked within herself, and seemed to lack
That noble element which could transmute
The dross of nature into finest gold ;
And struggled with her grief as with a foe
That only meant to torture. He had said,
“ There's good in pain ; I'll let it work its will ;
I'll strive to bear it as a flaming sword
Guided by some unseen but faultless hand

That knows the unsound parts, and means to cleave
Them right away ; and when the wound heals up,
I shall be sounder, healthier, for it all.”
He had been ill—a fever setting in
After the cold he caught ; but strength came round,
And once more he was working with a will.
Kenneth had come to Deignton for a while ;
The village surgeon having lately died,
And no one to succeed him, he had thought
It would extend his practice to remove.
The house he took was near the Vicarage,
And often in the evenings he called there,
Finding a sweet relief in Lilian's talk.
One night it chanced that Kenneth spoke to her
About those distant lands where she had been.
Lilian, of course, delighted in a theme
With which she was at home ; and called to mind
The sunny beauties of the glowing South.
Kenneth remarked : “Well, p'rhaps next week I'm off
To some of those fair parts : for long I've wished
To visit Switzerland, and now I think

The change will do me good." Lilian glanced up. There was a weary look upon his face Which puzzled her. It was the look of one Pressed with some trouble he would cast away, But yet had not the power or heart to do it. She did not know the real source of his pain. The frail young girl had borne her trials in life With the deep faith of one who laid her cares Down at the feet of Christ with trusting heart. Now Kenneth felt the more he lingered there, The more he saw of Marian, that his love Was kept alive ; he had not strength to fight Against his passion ; ill health made him weak And sensitive ; hope would not fold her wings, But fluttered near him. It would be as well If, for a little while, he went away.

A few nights after, Lilian was alone When Kenneth called ; he entered quickly, said, " Dear me, I thought the Vicar was at home." " He won't be very long ; I'm all alone. Marian was here about an hour ago ;

Since then I have been reading 'Thalaba.'"

(Lilian was sitting near the window-doors
That led into the garden by the church.
The evening then was grey ; an April sky
All overcast ; but just a tinge of red
Gave sign where now the sun was passing down.)

"Oh, have you? I don't know it ; is it good?"

"Yes ; but you seem worn out and sad to-night."

"Do I? I've been a long and weary round."

He rose, and glanced out on the twilight scene,
And his eyes wore the look which strong men's have,
When gazing on the dead face they have loved.

"That fever left me weak : I'm not quite strong,
And these long rounds, I find, are bad for me."

"But, Kenneth, you should get some help." "I must."

He looked then at the sweet and earnest face,
Turned now to him ; saw in those gentle eyes
Such depth of pity ; thought how such a heart
Would cling unto the soul it fondly loved.

Lilian gazed up at the few stars now out,
As though lost in a dream of future hope ;

Her fancy wildly picturing that realm—
The golden city with its flaming gates,
Its gem-built towers and dazzling palaces,
Bathed in the sunniest light. The wondrous plains,
Where glowing beauties, such as eye ne'er saw
Spread far and wide ; the tinted mists that veil
Those lofty hills ; the rivers of delight ;
The lakes, where every ripple seems to bear
A joy within its breast ; while the vast throng
Of blessed spirits, wandering there, in robes
Of glorious loveliness, give forth their praise
In streams of melody, that seemed to float
Unto her soul upon the scented wind.
But Kenneth saw a void—a vast expanse,
Stretching away, he knew not, cared not where ;
His mind gazing upon it with a sense
Of stale and empty life. He saw dim space,
An infinite domain—he knew not what.
He pictured an illimitable sea,
With weary spirits tossing to and fro,
Without a hope, and nothing near to them—

Nothing but bitter waters dashing high,
Filling the mouth with nauseousness ; ah ! well,
What did it mean ? what was that after-world ?
What was the fretting of the spirit now ?
Where was the link to bind the infinite
Unto the present ? Did it lay in pain ?
Was all life emblemed by a hideous dream,
In which our fevered minds are torn and racked
By frightful images ; while we are fixed,
Cannot throw off the terrible nightmare ;
Until at last the grateful morning comes,
When the dark vision fades away in light ?
Well, so he thought, as he mused sadly there
Upon that waste, that dreamy restless sea.
Gazing at last, where stars had now come out,
Sprinkled among the blue gaps of bright sky
That showed between the heavy clouds, he turned,
Saw Lilian watching him with tender eyes ;
Then suddenly exclaimed, " I'd give the world
To work on as I used to do ; but now——"
" What is it, Kenneth ? " asked the puzzled girl.

He seemed annoyed that he had spoken aught.

"O Kenneth, let Him help you, if you're sad ;

If wretched, God will comfort you, I know.

I'm sure you'll never ask His aid in vain."

"No, Lilian ; but the valley here is dark ;

In sorrow, as in life, we must not hope

That God will hurry what is good for us.

I shall be better when my strength comes back ;

It's physical. I am not strong of late.

Well, here's the Vicar. Dora's rosy face

Should put new spirits into any one.

I'm going away : the change will do me good."

And so he went, in a few days, abroad.

It might have been a month or so from this :

Once more, in evening, Marian sits alone

Beneath the shadows of the dreamy wood.

The twilight hangs its mystic haze

Around her soon ; the thoughtful night is near.

The life that has passed lately seems a dream ;

It wears a veil of such unearthly hue,

That she scarce thinks it was once as the hours

That now are fleeting ; something in the night
Recalls to her those few weeks of deep joy,
When, like a flower, she revelled in the light,
And knew no thought of anything but bliss.

There's a slow step upon the fallen leaves,
But she stirs not, her reverie too deep,
Until the shadow of a passing form
Falls over her, and causes that quick start.
She gave a slight moan as she saw the face
Of him who stood there in the evening light,
And waited as one who the poisoned draught
Has just drunk off, waits for the fatal end.
She scarcely breathed ; the air seemed to grow dense ;
At last these words came—O how changed to her
The once familiar tone !—" I've come back here
Merely to tell you all I've suffered since
The day we parted ; I could not live on
With the hot scorching thought within my soul
Of the great wrong that I had done to you ;
God knows that it was weakness on my part,
Not really meant, but from my want of will."

She turned on him those large bright glowing eyes,
Filling with tears, but not a word could speak.

After a while she answered bitterly :

“ I do not chide you ; you but sought the end
For which you seemed to think this life was meant ;
As long as it gave pleasure, you cared not.”

“ Marian, you wrong me ; I was weak and mad.

I could but love you ; though I know full well

I should have shunned you from the earliest hour

We chanced to meet.” “ Is that then saying much ?

You acted wrong : a little openness

Would have spared me long hours of wretchedness,

And you an act of selfish treachery.

Had I but known that you'd another love,

That for two years you were engaged, think you

I should have cherished the fond, fatal thought,

That like a curse has fallen on my life ?”

“ Marian, I, too, have suffered : did you know

When I came here, the struggle that I had,

You would not speak so harshly. I was bound

To marry her : I could not give up all ;

Could not give up my father's heritage."

"What does it matter? why waste words on this?

You came down here, and won my love, and thought
Not a bit of my fate; no, I might die;
Might bleed with pain at every pore for you,
It did not matter; you could go away,
And leave a chance word to reveal the truth,
Which, you must know, would come like heaven's doom:

"Twas wrong, wrong to both her and me, it was."

"God pardon me," he sighed, "I know it was.
There's no more to be said. I did not think
You would have been so harsh; I ever thought
Something would happen to unite our hearts.
Ah Marian, I did love you passionately—
Nay, even now, there's no one in the world
For whom I feel so fondly as for you."

"How dare you breathe such awful words to me?
You, married to a young and loving girl
Who believes, doubtless, that your heart is hers.
But I am changed; I am not what I was.
My love was but a germ, it might have grown,

It might have strengthened and endured for ever,
But that false soil you threw about its roots
Blighted all promise, so it died away,
Leaving me pained and lonely; but no more
Would that love blossom; had you even come
To marry me, I should have scorned a love
That was so casual, likely to be borne
This way or that, not the result of all
That's best and truest in this life of ours.
No, Sydney, such a love as yours may be
Fit to amuse an hour, but nothing more."
"You're harsh; I came to rid myself of thoughts
That haunted me about your broken life.
We shall not meet again; our paths henceforth
Will be apart." "Ah! would to God," she said,
"Our lives had lain apart before!" "I too
Can wish it, for there's no sweet life for me.
My days are sad enough; you need not say
Aught that will make my life more sorrowful."
"I do not wish it; 'tis a sad, sad thought
That you and I have met, and caused such pain.

O Sydney, learn to grasp a higher hope ;
Learn to devote yourself to her, your wife ;
You'll then be happy ; try to make her so.
I may have spoken harshly ; it was pain
That forced me to it. Now you'd better go,
It's growing late. God keep and comfort you ;
And think no more of me, for I have grown
Resigned to trouble now." " Good-bye," he said.
I've wronged you, Marian, but I feel as though
A new life had begun within my veins ;
I thank you for the light you shed o'er it."
" God bless you, Sydney ; now good-bye, indeed."
'Twas a long while ere Marian wandered home ;
She sat there weeping, but a soothing calm
Had grown up in her soul ; she felt now peace,
As though the storm had come, and passed away.

IX.

One day when Marian came into the room,
She noticed Rachel all absorbed in thought.
" Why, what's the matter with you ? clumsy girl !

You've burnt the linen : did I startle you ?

But what makes you in tears ? I did not mean
To speak so harshly ; do not sob like that."

" Well, Miss, I've had a note from brother Jim,
He says he wants to see me if I'll come ;
He's now at Bristol, working in the Docks.
It's very far, and I've no money, Miss."

" 'Tis a long way—I don't know how you'd go ;
But leave off crying : I will see about it."

The next day Marian said, " Rachel, I think
You'd better stay ; it will unsettle you."

" Oh, no, it wont ; I only want to go
And see Jim for awhile ; I do not mean
To stay there long ; you need not be afraid,
I am not likely to go wrong again."

" I don't think, Rachel, that you will, but yet
It would be wiser for you to remain ;
You're restless and are fond of change, I know,
Lately you've been more so ; but if you wish,
I'll manage it, and find you all the means."

" Oh, thank you, Miss, it's very kind of you."

Now Rachel had of late grown troublesome ;
She wearied of the quiet country life.
After the illness and the misery
She suffered till she came that spring-time night
Into the wood, and found our Marian there,
The calm and beauty of a home was sweet.
The wild, not to say wanton, life she'd led,
Had left its traces on her inner soul ;
Her vagrant, restless spirit was not yet
Subdued, and all the fierce impulsiveness
Would at times rise, and sway her as it willed.
A better path was dimly seen by her.
It was as though upon some night you'd ta'en
A bird from out the woods, dying from cold,
And placed it in a warm and cosy room.
There, for a time, 'twould revel joyously ;
But yet the old impulses are not dead,
The memories of the rustling woods still fresh,
And it would long for the free life outside.
So, Rachel had not yet the mastery
Of all the promptings of her restless soul.

'Twas more for change, than seeing any one
She longed to visit Bristol at this time,
So in a few days gladly left the farm.
The summer came. About the end of June
Lilian and Marian wandered through the lanes.
They called at Farley's cottage, found in tears
His daughter Charlotte. Father, she told them,
Would not consent to her being married yet.
She had a lover ; it was very hard
Father should want to keep her longer there.
After they'd cheered the girl as best they could
The two friends went a ramble by the sea,
Talking more as in old times than had been
Their wont of late : " I wonder, Lilian dear,
If we shall ever go unto the South,
As you have wished." " No, Marian, somehow now
I've given up the longing to be there ;
My roavings now are o'er. But have you heard
From Kenneth lately ? " " Yes, I had a note
But yesterday, the third that he has sent."
" How is he now ? " " He writes most cheerfully,

Narrated two or three queer tales, and said
He wished he'd left his nose behind him 'here.
But broke out into raptures of the views
He has from fair Geneva, where he's now ;
Has had some near escapes through being rash."
"That's just like him. Do you not long to go?"
"Ah ! I do Lilian, it would be so grand !"
"He would not like to have us bothering him."
"I don't know, dearie, there are few alive
Who have more sympathies than Kenneth Grove.
He's quick, but if you only knew the pain
And trouble he has." "Doubtless, though through all,
I'm sure he's kind and gentle at the core."
"Yes, at the core, and on the rind as well.
Why, Lilian, I would give the world to grip
With half his strength, the truths he acts upon."
"Well, Marian, I can't say." "But, Lilian dear,
You know you've faith in what you feel, believe.
You've always felt the same, been taught the views
You hold ; you never thought them out, and groped
Through dim mists to the light ; your spirit ne'er

Struggled for dreary months in hope to find
The truths it was athirst for ; your sweet faith,
Your perfect trust, reliance, are so great,
So beautiful, that one may well desire
To be as you ; but if one does not see
Things as you do, what then ? ” “ But, Marian dear,
It is quite plain ; although my life is sweet,
Were I to tell you all the weary pain,
The suffering, the long days and nights I’ve had
In sickness, and the many lesser trials
That all have here ; for I’m so sensitive
A word sometimes distresses ; then you’d think
My life had been most hard. Ah ! no, God’s love
Has been in all ; I’ve felt His solace steal
Like some exquisite incense unto me.”
They spoke no more, but wandered gently on,
Talking of other times, till suddenly
The bitter grief of Marian’s life awoke ;
She threw her arms with an impulsive warmth
Round Lilian’s neck, and then burst into tears.
For some time she lay sobbing piteously,

And clung close, hiding her hot face and head
In Lilian's bosom ; it was all out then.
The strong resolve to bear her trial alone
Had yielded to the tenderness that came
Welling from out her friend's pure life and heart.
And, as the two girls slowly, silently
Walked home that night, there seemed a holier bond
Linking with tenderest sympathy their lives.

Marian was restless through the lonely weeks
That followed this with uneventful calm ;
For Rachel had but written once, and that
Was nearly two weeks since ; and Marian longed
That Kenneth should come back ; she felt his loss,
Because there was no one with whom her soul
Seemed to feel such a trust and strength. The light
Of that fair summer, as it brightly streamed
Upon the farm, the orchard, and the flowers,
Had in its beauty, pathos that went deep,
And awoke music in her soul, as though
It were a strain that held the buried past.
She loved still more the shadow of those trees,

Where often lips that now were silent—dead,
For her at least, had whispered fondest words ;
And though she knew 'twas wrong to cherish thoughts,
To keep still dear the dreams of former joy,
There's something in our nature that defies
The cold keen touch of reason in these things.

Lilian one night was reading near the house,
Musing betimes, and watching the dim sky,
When Kenneth Grove came up the garden path.
He'd been in Deignton now a day or two,
But Lilian had not seen him ere to-night.
“ You're back again, have you enjoyed yourself ? ”
“ Oh, yes, I'm stronger than I've been for years.
Forsooth, it's life, not dragging flesh along
As if it were a burden and a curse.
Why, Lilian, when I roved among the Alps,
And drank the breath of mountains in the morn,
Climbed the great peaks, I thought, Am I the same
Who but a few days used to mope about ?
The ills of life vanished before the strength,
The freshness, of those wild majestic heights.

I never left them ; it was glorious
To wander, as a swift deer of the hills,
Anywhere, so that I could drink in health.”
“ You did not go to Italy at all ? ”
“ No, Lilian, only just across the pass.”
“ I thought you promised me you’d go and see
The lovely haunts I told you of.” “ I did,
But I was chained unto the glorious Alps.”
“ Not like Prometheus to the Caucasus ;
At any rate, you’ve killed the vulture now.”
“ Yes. How is Marian ? I’ve not been there yet.”
“ Not been unto the farm ? ” “ No, that I’ve not ;
Let’s go down now ; the dew begins to fall,
I’ll go and fetch a cloak. A little stroll
Will not harm you.” “ Thanks, I should like it much.”
They went down through the lanes, unto the farm ;
Marian was in the garden : Trevor sat
Smoking beside her. The old man exclaimed :
“ Why, Kenneth, you back, lad ? and rosy, too,
As any apple ; ah ! Miss Lilian, dear,
You must get Kenneth to restore the bloom

Unto your cheeks : why, Marian, how you blush !

One would think that the lassie had grown shy,

Or else ne'er seen our Kenneth till to-night.

Let's have another flagon of this ale.

You don't take ale, Miss Lilian ; we've some wine

I know you like. Well, sit down, Kenneth, lad ;

Are ye not glad to get back to us all ? ”

“ Oh, yes, although 'twas glorious where I've been.”

“ Was it, eh ? but they foreign folks ar'n't much.”

“ I don't like them so well as some I know,

But yet I got on famously ; they've faults,

But so have we.” “ That's true, but, Kenneth lad,

That white stuff which they drink is like themselves.

There's not a man who'd put a mug of this

Away like you or me : why we two, boy,

With Mike and Hick, are worth a score of them.”

Kenneth laughed heartily. “ Well, Farmer, men

Are not all bred upon this bracing coast.”

“ Not they, I never saw a foreign lout

But what I thought a breath of mine would send

Him into bits. Miss Lilian laughs at me ;

I like a man who has stout limbs and thews,
Not clothes-frames merely. You look strong, my lad,
And I'm right glad to have you back with us."

A day or two from this Kenneth had called,
And, wishing to go over to the Creek,
Marian walked with him. The soft tranquil eve
Brought back to both the memories of a night
When they had strolled along that rugged coast,
And hope had wafted thoughts of light and love
Through both their trusting hearts. "What a great
change

Has come o'er us since the last time we walked
Along this shore together, two years since !"

"Yes, Kenneth, it has been a weary time."

"You know, dear Marian, how I tried to crush

All thought of you. I could not do it then ;

And you remember how, some months ago,

Yon roof was blown away, and I lay ill ;

It was through weakness, my whole frame was low.

One's nervous system gets deranged and weak ;

It's no use struggling, we must get it round.

With health and work, all ills of life are poor,
And vanish like snow-heaps before the sun.
I now can see you, and feel happy, dear,
When we're together ; but I do not mean
That love has changed, only, I'm now resigned
To what must be, and mean to live content.
'Twould be a strange look-out if everything
We wanted came to us. The shadows, dear,
Could not exist, but for the light behind."
They sat down on the summit of the cliff,
To watch the sun descend into the waves,
And spread its curtain of bright gold and red
Above the clouds that fringed the tossing sea.
" Kenneth, we're wiser than we were that night.
I, too, have felt how frail is what we wish,
How little hopes should sway our actions here ;
And learnt that passion, while it thrills us through,
May after all not be the best for us ;
That God sees farther than our feverish hearts,
And keeps the blessing till we're worthy of it.
Perhaps in years I may love you as much

As you do me, I cannot say as yet ;
I cannot bear to think of being left
Alone, without the love of any one.
It may seem wrong to talk like this to you,
But I'm resolved that you shall hear the truth.
I think it's wiser you should see my soul,
Know how I really feel, than still to live
In utter darkness, as it were, of all.
A little hiding of a simple truth
Once wrought for me the keenest misery.
There's nothing like being open, being true.
I cling, as some frail creeper of the woods,
To what is kind and loving, long to have
A bosom where I could my feverish head
Lay trustingly. My love for you as yet
Is not as yours. I hope, I long, I pray
It may be one day, Kenneth, for I know
'Twould be the happiest hour of my life
When I could truly say, My love is yours."
" Ah, Marian, that fair dream, which even now
I cherish, whether it grows real or not,

I shall have been the nobler for its presence.
You know, the tint upon a mountain cast
By the soft rosy blushes of the eve,
Is, after all, a fancy, still it is
The source of joy, and when it fades away
The image it has left upon the mind
Helps to refine and purify the soul.
So, here, we never cherish lofty thoughts,
Ne'er cling to dreams of what is high, sublime,
Without our life receiving wealth from them.
It does not matter what those lives may be ;
If the stuff's poor, the nobler is our task
In making something great of them. Coarse earth
The sculptor takes, and soon moulds out of it
The deathless image of a beauteous form.
Less gifted artists hew the marble block,
The rarest alabaster carve and shape,
Leaving behind them merely chips and dirt."
Marian looked round, and sadly said, " You're right ;
We quarrel with our circumstance and lot,
And see not that 'tis we who are to blame."

The sun was streaming o'er the trembling sea ;
The flush of crimson light that spread along
The edges of the sky like shadowy isles,
Now floated on the waves, reflected there ;
Till sea and sky a flaming panoply
Made on the far horizon. Kenneth said :
" How very fair ! It is the dying light
Of but another day. Within your heart
There sinks to rest a hope ; ah ! lovelier far
Than light or music. We will wait awhile,
Until the Spirit of all life and joy
Renews those hues that once glowed in your soul."

A few days after this Rachel came back.
She was a fearful sight, her face grown lean,
The bloom of health which was there when she left
Had vanished from it. She had never seen
Her brother after all ; he'd gone away
Some days before, and through the city streets
She wandered day and night in search of him.
She asked for money ; hers was now all spent ;
They laughed at her ; and so a day or two

Passed, and the girl left the dark city haunts,
And hastened to the country ; then she came
In time back unto Deighton. " O dear, Miss,
'Twas wrong for me to go away at all ;
I'll never leave you of my own accord :
I'll go and tell that Charlotte Farley, too ;
She wants, I know, to run away from home."

Charlotte and Rachel had been friends ere this,
Indeed, old Farley was most kind to her,
And Rachel loved the old man very much.
So the next day she started for his cot ;
It was too late, that very morn her friend
Had gone away. Ere Rachel reached the place
Farley came in, not knowing of her flight.
He had been to the town to buy some wood,
And as he came in quickly, dropped his bag.
'Twas heavy. " Ah," he said, " there's many an hour
Of good brisk work, my wooden friends, in you."
He leant a moment on his bench and smiled.
" I wonder where is Charlotte, she's gone out ;
No dinner ready ! why, what can it mean ?

That's like the giddy young; I'll bet a crown
She's gone down to the village for a chat,
Or else to show her bright face in the dell.

Why, what is this? a letter in her hand!

Dear me, what can it mean? I am afraid

To break the seal, can anything be wrong?"

The old man slowly broke the seal, and read.

His eyes grew bright and wild, and seemed to start
Out of his head; then tears streamed down his face,

As clutching feebly at his bench he moaned,

"Gone! run away! and left me all alone!"

He leant his head against the wall and wept,

Sobbing with piteous grief. He looked up once,

And his eyes rested on the little toys,

Then turned away, and wept more bitterly.

"I loved her so, I didn't mean to force

The poor girl from my house. She'll never more

Come back to me; the light of my old days

Has gone out now, I am alone, alone!"

After a while he rose and rushed towards

A little cupboard, and reached down a flask;

'Twas full of brandy ; one long draught he took,
And then another, till it was all gone ;
Then quickly turned the wood on to the floor,
And briskly jumping up before the shelf,
Pulled down the toys, and gaily filled his bag.
His face was flushed : " Now, to the village, now !
I want no toys ; there's no more need to work."
Then with his bag he rushed along the lanes
Into the village, where the children played,
Having just come from school. 'Twas a green spot
With shady sycamores along the side :
The school-house to the left, and a few cots
With fields in front. " Come, children, come," he cried,
Darting into their midst, " see, here are toys.
Come, stand around me with your merry looks ;
Your dear good faces shall be brighter soon.
We'll play together : what would you like, dear ?
Ah, here's a dog, a bow-wow-wow for you.
And you, my child, shall have a little puss.
There are gee-gees for those who've learnt to ride."
And the old man threw four or five out, then

Diving again into his bag, he cried :
“ This for the lassie in the scarlet frock,
Some pin-cushions ; and here’s a doll or two ;
A waggon for the plaid-frocked little boy.
Would any one like this—a large Noah’s ark ? ”
“ I would, I would.” “ Then you must scramble for it,
And now, for this, and this,” until at last
The bag was empty ; then he clapped his hands
And jumped about in a wild frantic way,
And seizing two or three of them, he said :
“ Now form a circle, for we’ll dance a bit.”
His long white hair streamed all about his head,
And the thin face was lighted with a smile.
’Twas strange to see ; and then the noisy throng
Of laughing boys and girls dancing away,
And shouting merrily as round they went.
“ Faster, now faster,” cried the old man oft ;
Till breathless, the whole troop were forced to pause.
Some villagers had come up by the green,
Staring, and wondering at old Farley’s prank ;
And Rachel, passing by there to the cot,

Went up to him, and took him by the hand ;
" Why, what's the matter ? " he looked up at her,
And answered wildly : " She has run away ;
I shan't want toys or money any more.
Look at these merry souls, are they not gay ? "
" Farley," said Rachel, " come along with me."
And without more ado she led him off.
When they came to the house, the old man paused,
And then his grief burst out with a new strength,
" Oh, she has run away and left me here !
Who'll sit with me through the long winter nights ?
And help me put the sawdust in the dolls,
Or sew their legs and arms when they are full ?
Dear me ! them are the paints I bought for her.
She used to sing such pretty songs at night,
And paint the cows so neatly ; now, she's gone.
I've no one left to love me in the world."
Here he left off, and leaning down his head,
Wearied with toil, at last sunk into sleep ;
While Rachel made the fire, and waited there
To tend the old man when he should awake.

X.

Six months have passed away ; the winter cold
Is changing into spring ; and Kenneth stands
Talking to Marian ; he looks sad and grieved,
And Marian anxious, for the winter months
Have been severe, and Lilian's health so bad,
That for long weeks she has been in the house.
So Kenneth tells to Marian his worst fears :
"She's very weak, but so resigned and still
That not a murmur rises to her lips ;
At times I think there's something on her mind.
I went last night ; Lilian was half asleep,
And when she woke, looked anxiously around,
Saying she had been dreaming ; but how good
It was of me to come and visit her.
I think her spirit frets about a grief
Which neither you nor I can understand."
Marian said nothing, but upon her dawned
A faint suspicion that in Kenneth lay
The secret source of any mental pain.

Not that poor Lilian loved him with the hopes
And fears of those whose days are to be here ;
Rather, it was as if a subtle joy
God had sent down to comfort her last hours.
Kenneth had never dreamed of such a thing ;
But Marian, who with quicker glance had seen
Her dear friend flush with pleasure when he came,
Guessed that her spirit hung upon his words.
It was a sad hour for the puzzled girl ;
She did not feel for him that passionate love,
That fierce absorbing tenderness, that rush
Of warm delicious joy, she'd known before ;
Yet in her soul a deep affection dawned,
That seemed the promise of a happier time.
It would be hard to part with that sweet hope
Now that it lightly rose into her soul ;
But yet, the happiness of those she loved
Should be far holier than her own delight.
As Kenneth walked away, these thoughts came up,
And her heart shook ; there was a weary sense
That all would end once more in hopelessness.

She yearned for love, yearned for that fervent soul
To be her own ; but now there was a bar ;
And for one moment she in sorrow wished
That she could rush away and leave this world.
But the same night Marian went to her friend.
Lilian was pale and thin ; she sat beside
The window, gazing in her thoughtful way
Up to the sky ; a kind of longing hope
Upon her wasted features—then a flush
As Marian entered. For some time she lay
Nestling upon that bosom tenderly,
So peaceful, that her gentle movements seemed
As slight as those of a young babe that sleeps
Close to its mother's heart. " Oh, Marian dear,
I love to have you by me always now ;
It will not be for long ; I'm growing worse."
" Don't talk like that ; it makes me sad indeed.
I sometimes think if you had all you wished
You might be better ; is there any hope
That would perhaps make you desire to live ?"
" No, Marian ; if there is one tender thought

That I have cherished,—you may guess it dear—

But that is nothing—nothing to me here.

I used to wish for it, but now, my love,

I would not have it ; it would make life glad,

But death a little bitter. God will take

Me to Him ere the spring has passed away ;

What do I with the gentle hopes of earth ?

Oh, Marian, 'tis as if a holy strain

Of music has been hovering round my life,

'Tas made my later days on earth so fair,

This cherishing a thought I know is vain,

But yet 'tis beautiful ! had I had health,

I should have grieved if his love were not mine ;

But now, the thought of it has been so sweet."

"But, Lilian dear, you'll not die yet, I know ;

You're only weak. I think at times, this love

Has been the cause of it." "No, Marian, no !

My life for years has been a failing breath ;

I feel I shall go ere the spring is o'er.

'Tis lovelier than you think. Look up, dear friend ;

I never watch that bright glad host of stars

Without recalling what's beyond the veil;
And never without seeing that bless'd hour
When all I've loved will join me in that world."

Kenneth had settled now at his new work.
The house upon the cliff he used at times,
Not caring to give up his lonely ways.
He often came unto the Vicarage,
For Lilian was compelled to keep her room.
Marian spent hours with her dying friend,
Who used to talk a great deal in her way,
Half musing, and half fancying that life
Which she hoped in a little while to know ;
Loving to speak about her books ; and hear
The touching pieces that had twined themselves
Around her memory through the painful life.
No one had clung unto the soothing thoughts,
The lovely pictures, that the gifted soul
Pours out in words, more than this tender girl.
One evening, after a long sleep she woke,
And took down some of her beloved works.

"When I die, Marian," she looked up and said,
"I'll leave you all my books," and, with a smile
She quickly ran them over in this way :
"First, Herrick's songs with which I fell in love
Once when I went to stay at Aunt Delille's—
The stream of fragrance from the flowers that grow
So thickly in his works enchanted me.
Then Goldsmith's sweet and tender minstrelsy—
So sad and beautiful, like some wild bird
Singing in moonlit dell. There's Coleridge, too,
Pouring out ghostly fantasies that through
Their mystic veil still shine with splendid hues—
The nightingale of poets, whose full tones
Are rare indeed : well, not to weary you,
I've dear old Keats, whom I have often read
In these wild lovely woods. I call him, dear,
My paradise, for there the long year round,
The richest blossoms glow, and fairest scenes
From fancy's grot are to be ever viewed.
Then Shelley, with a lofty daring flight,
Rising upon the highest wings of song,

Darting the most effulgent glances o'er
All nature, and entwining it at times
With imagery of the sublimest kind.
Anne Procter's lyrics, that have been so sweet
To read when lying ill, and when one longs
For something that will solace the dull soul ;
And many others—none I love like these.
I know they're not the highest minds on earth,
But in them I've found sympathy, and that
Has made me love them fondly as I do."

It might have been a week or more from this,
Dora came to the farm with tearful eyes :
Lilian was sinking fast, and Kenneth said
He did not think she could outlive the night.
So Marian went back to the Vicarage.
The house was still and hushed when they walked up
Into the chamber of the dying girl.
She lay there, on her bed, so beautiful !
With such a peaceful look upon her face—
Lit gently up by one thin wave of gold,
That streamed from her clear eyes, and spread itself

Into a smile ; you might have thought that she
Was gazing at some lovely scene, that filled
Her soul with joy. It was but that her life
Was passing in a blissful dream away.

As Marian entered Lilian raised herself,
And quickly stretching out her wasted arms,
Held them up longing for her friend to come.
Marian leant o'er, and drew her to her breast,
Placing her face against the pallid cheek
That no rose-hue would ever tinge again.
A long hour passed ; you might have seen the eyes
Were wandering in their gaze ; the cheeks grew pale
And paler, as the moments fled away.
These were but signs that the long rest was near ;
The day that had been sad, was soon to end.
Lilian at last looked up, and feebly said :
“ I'm very weak ; I feel it will not now
Be long ere I am in that other world.
Dear Marian, raise the blind, that I may look
Out on the trees once more. Thanks, dearest, thanks.
I now can see the flowers, and think I smell

Their fragrance. Oh, how fair ! Yon crimson light
Plays over the fresh leaves, and colours them
With hues that do not seem to me of earth.
Oh, grander tints than those from yonder sun,
Will stream about us when we meet again ;
We shall be happy—how I love you all !
God has been good to us ; too good to me :
I feel no pain, only a strange dim sense
Of something glorious about to be.
For, ‘ so He giveth His beloved sleep.’ ”
There was a pause ; none spoke—a sob or two
Broke on the stillness of the room—the eyes
Of Lilian closed—her lips moved slowly then,
And with a smile there came again the words,
“ Ah ! ‘ so He giveth His beloved sleep.’ ”

Sadly did Marian walk home through the lanes,
Stopping at times to look back at the house.
Her large bright glowing eyes were full of tears,
And glistened in the moonlight as the dew
Upon an opening flower. ’Twas about ten
When the farmhouse was reached ; but ere she went

Up to the door, she turned and sat awhile
Upon the garden-seat ; weeping betimes,
And thinking of the days that were now gone.
When she went in, her father, brothers stood
Beside the table : she sat quietly down,
And without saying anything, removed
Her hat and cloak—and for awhile none spoke.
The sad news was now known throughout the village.
“ Well, dear,” at last the farmer gently said,
“ The little darling’s gone ; ’tis well for her.
You know, my dear, she was not ever well ;
Always in pain, and suffering very much.
She now is happy.” The two lads looked down—
Then Hicky took his sister’s hand and pressed
It in his own strong one. “ She was a soul,”
The manly fellow said, “ too good for here ;
And those who did not feel her tenderness
Must have been made of stone.” “ ’Twas beautiful,”
Marian burst out ; “ I did not feel that grief
I should have done—it was so heavenly !
To see the clear light of her earnest eyes

Breaking in smiles over the wasted face,
As if the splendour of that other world
Were shining there, before she had left this :
And when she said ' Good-bye,' 'twas just as if
She were but going from that room of hers
Into the next." " Ah, dear !" the old man said,
" Well, I remember when your mother died,
She was as calm and happy as a saint.
There's nothing terrible in it, but what
The conscience brings unto the dying hour.
I tell ye, boys, that if ye ever do
A tricky action ; if ye lie or cheat,
You'll feel it then. Don't cry, my little pet ;
The sunshine that was with you will come back
After a few more moons. Don't cry, my dear ;
You'll see her one day in that better land."

Marian soon after went up to her room.
Slowly she moved about as in a dream.
Looking towards the window, she beheld
The clear moon streaming o'er the silent world ;
Then lifting up the sash, Marian looked out.

There, the lone earth was still and beautiful
In its great robe of light. Across the dell
Stood the old Vicarage ; there all was dark
Save one small window, where a light burnt dim.
Marian bent down, and quickly dashed her arm
Across her eyes ; how bitter was the thought
That all the sweetness of their love was o'er !
Close to the house arose the quaint old church,
Hoar with the dust of centuries, and rich
With hallowed memories of the solemn past.
And then the churchyard, with its many graves ;
“ The green back-ground of life,” as Jean Paul says.
The lonely dead that lie at rest for ever—
All was before her, vivid—trance-like—sad.
Leaving the open window, she outpoured
Her heart in prayer to Him who gave the life.
And when she fell asleep, to her there came
The spirit of her friend into the room,
With purer eyes, with saintlier look than here ;
Who with a soft and beauteous melody
Hovered about her ; when she rose from earth,

There seemed to echo through the starry world,
"Ah ! so He giveth His beloved sleep."

XI.

'Tis cold December, and the white snow rests
On Lilian's grave near to the quaint church tower.
Her memory sweetly lingering in the minds
Of all who knew her. Marian this cold day
Has been some time sitting before the fire ;
And now 'tis afternoon, when the light fades,
And all without is hazy and obscure.
The fire crackles, throwing quivering gleams
Over the room ; and if you look outside
You see its flames, reflected, glowing still.
Marian sits there, and muses on the past.
Lilian of course rises, with all the hours
Of love and tenderness that they had known.
She thinks how wider is her life ; how years
Have lifted the dim veil from off all things.
Her spirit, like a seed sown in rough soil,
Has struggled up, has grown in spite of weeds,

Has thrust away the thorny shrubs anear ;
How many truths that once were vague and dim
Now stand out sharp and clear ; how she resolves,
By that bright hearth, to consecrate her days
Unto the highest ends ; and so she sits ;
The great log burning cheerfully away.
Trevor comes in with Hicky ; Mike ere long
Follows them, with his firm and hasty tread.
“ Father,” he says, “ there’s a storm coming on ;
’Tis cold and bitter : we shall have a night
As has not been for many a long long year.”
“ Ah, lad, it’s cold, but let it blow, forsooth ;
We’ll pile the logs on, make all cheery here.
What does it matter if the wind sweeps by,
Or the snow lies a foot deep on the ground ?
Our lass will sing a song or two, while we
Enjoy our pipes and ale. Well, Hicky lad,
You’ll soon be running from us ; ere a year
There’ll only be the lass, and Mike, and me.
“ Never fear, father,” Hicky here exclaimed,
“ ’Twill give you then another lass to pet.”

“ Yes, boys, and we’ll be merry round this hearth,
This hearth you lads have wanted to destroy.
Some little ones will climb my knees, and cry
‘ Grandfather.’ Well, I’m growing old, ’tis true,
But yet, please God, I shall live till that time.”

To-night the “ Swan ” has such a company
As some two years ago were gathered there.
Old Davy Thudge, and Scratch, and Watty Stone ;
Old Farley too, with some half-dozen more,
Are sitting round the cosy parlour fire.

They’re jesting the old toyman with a will ;
He, in a freak, has just turned Catholic.
Watty exclaims : “ I wouldn’t do as you ;
I saw you kiss a priest’s coat but last week.
You, an old man, to kiss a young priest’s coat ! ”
“ Laugh away, Watty ; I love God, and do
What His priest tells me ; as for you, my boy,
Why you don’t worship anything, you don’t.”

“ Well, Farley ; I’ve six children now at home.”
“ That looks like worship,” muttered David Thudge.
“ On Sunday morning, when it’s fair and bright,”

Watty went on, "I take two in the fields,
And there we worship ; in the afternoon
I take two more ; and later on the rest."
"A pretty infidel," the sexton groaned.
"You get along ; when I am short of rubbish
To fill a ditch, I know who'll do instead."
"Now, now," said Kenneth, who was standing by,
"Don't go too far ; there's not a better soul
Than Farley in the parish ; I don't care
What he believes ; and as for honest Dan,
Who means to bury all of us even yet,
Why, honest Dan, I've known as good and true
Since I was quite a child." "That's right, that's right,"
Said David Thudge ; "my mind goes farther back ;
Why, ere I took the mail, Dan was about,
A young brisk fellow, after all the girls,
And loved by quite a score." "Oh," Watty said,
"You sly old am'rous dog !" "Why, don't you know,"
David went on, "they called him 'captain' then,
'Cause he was such a gay and gallant chap."
"Oh, Dan ! oh, Dan !" went round the little group,

“Why, who’d have thought it of old sexton Dan!”
“Ah, Watty, them were days of Auld Lang Syne.
And Farley here, afore he took to toys
Could crack a joke with lassies on the green.”
I’ve got my daughter back,” the old man said,
“And that’s the only lassie I care for.”
Just then a villager came rushing in,
Saying, that flames were rising from the dell
Near to the farm ; it must have caught somewhere.
“It’s that cursed flue,” said Kenneth ; “come along,
Follow me down the road,” and out he sprang.
When the rest came into the open air,
A hazy brightness hung above the spot
Where the farm stood, and as they strode along
The flames were visible, until the house
Came all in sight, and they beheld the roof
One mass of fire ; the thatching sucking up
The fierce light in an eager, thirsty way.
The flames were running in wild lurid riot
Along the rafters ; crackling as they spread—
Gorging themselves upon the massive beams ;

Then rushing in upon the untouched parts,
And darting out with new vehemency ;
Then curling round the brick-built chimneys there,
And flaring up like beacons on a height ;
Then fiercely from the windows leaping out,
And rushing up the sides, dashed here and there,
As the wind came in gusts upon the walls.
While all around, the faces of the throng
Were lighted by the fatal radiance thrown ;
And overhead the heavens were shrouded dark,
While upon earth the snow robe brightly lay.
Kenneth struck through the crowd, and came to where
Old Trevor stood gazing with wildered face.
“ It’s like touchwood inside ; the beams are dry
As tinder ; but where’s Marian, is she safe ? ”
“ She went inside ; she cannot be there still,
I thought Mike had her ; God ! she cannot be
Still helping Rachel ! ” Kenneth dashed away
Through the black smoke, up to the young girl’s room ;
There Rachel sat trembling, and cold, and dazed,
The awful scene had crushed all reason out ;

And by her Marian, who in vain was bent
On urging her to rise. "Come, Marian, come !
I'll see to Rachel—you must not stay here."
Marian moved not, but merely said, "I'm safe ;
Oh, carry down this poor girl, then I'll come."
Kenneth turned quickly, passed his lusty arm
Round Marian's form, and drew her from the room.
"Good heavens," he said, "the flames are spreading
here !

Run down the stairs and you are safe ; I'll bring
Rachel with me." He turned into the room
And found her senseless, for the smoke had burst
From forth the other end ; he raised her up,
But as he came upon the landing now
The stairs gave way, and headlong to the earth
He and his burden fell, some ten feet depth.
Kenneth struck first, his arm was underneath,
And the shock crushed it ; raising as he could
Poor Rachel's form, he shouted to the rest.
Marian came running in, and helped him up ;
She saw the arm was bleeding, and then asked,

"Oh! Kenneth, are you hurt?" "Not much, I think.

She's safe, but swooned; my arm is only bruised,

A little cut; but that will soon be right."

Mike lifted Rachel up, and carried her

Into the nearest house. The flames had now

Run out their course, their fury well-nigh spent;

And as they ceased they left a dark charred mass,

And Farmer Trevor pale with grief and rage.

A great link in the chain of what he loved

Was gone for ever: the old hearth had seen

So many sitting round it in the past;

But now it was the cause of this sad scene:

For, after all, the chimney had caught fire

And burnt the place. The farmer's eyes were full

As he turned with his daughter from the scene.

The crowd cleared off, and through the dreary night

The old walls smouldered; while the heavens were dark,

And upon earth the snow-robe sweetly lay.

Marian and Trevor went to Kenneth's house,

Which being near, had also ample room.

Through the long night the winds still fiercely blew,

And the morn broke with dim and sullen haze.
Kenneth did not come home till nearly ten ;
He seemed worn out, and dropped down in a chair,
Gazing with weariness upon the sky,
As if to catch some break in the vast gloom.
But fiercer grew all day the mighty wind
That howled across the downs, and swept the snow
In great drifts by the village. As the night
Came darkly on, its threatening strength increased,
And a great tempest shook the land and sea.
'Twas about four, that Kenneth wearily
Looked out into the dark and howling night.
“ Dear me, it will be fearful on the cliff.
There's poor old Widow Moss nigh paralyzed,
And no one save a child in the lone house.
And how will Walter do with his bad arm ?
He has no liniment to bandage it.”
Kenneth then put his coat on hurriedly :
“ Marian, I may be out until the morn ;
No knowing what may happen off the cliff.”
“ You do not mean,” she said, “ to start off now ?”

"Yes, Marian, I am bound for Lympley Creek."

Without another word, he went out then
Into the snow and cold, towards his house
Upon the height. He walked along in haste,
And did not seem to heed the biting wind,
That fiercely drove the snow into his face,
But breasted it like a strong piece of rock.

"There's danger off the Point to-night," he thought;
"Surely some bark, as round the head it sweeps,
Will be dashed on the rocks. I never knew
The wind blow in such gusts across this hill."

But Marian, too, had started in the storm.
When left alone, she felt the keenest pain
For Kenneth, toiling through the freezing air,
Could not keep still, and at last rushed upstairs,
Put on her things, and hurried after him.
Plash, plash, her feet upon the sodden ground
Went wearily; dull—cold—benumbed—her hands
Grew in the air, and the crisp flakes of snow
Covered her o'er; she tried to run a bit,
But the wind driving them into her face,

Made her soon weary ; on, and on, she went,
Resolved to reach the cliff sometime at least.

Kenneth had passed the house, and gone on straight
Until he stood upon the sharp bleak Point.

'Twas dark as death ; he scanned and scanned the sea,
But nothing save the night revealed itself.

He looked up quickly ; 'twas a fretted world
Of snow-flakes and of gloom ; to right and left,

A little way, the pale white earth was seen ;

But the storm rushed around the lonely Point,

Sweeping, as the grim thoughts of memory,
From a dim world of darkness back to gloom.

He stood like this awhile, until he heard

The weary dragging steps of some one near ;

When Marian quickly ran to him, and cried :

“ Oh, here you are ! I do not mind the storm,

I would have come with you ; it was so hard

To see you go away ; to fade at last

Into the bosom of the threatening dark

As if you were alone in all your life.

Oh, Kenneth ! we will live or die together.”

"Good God!" he cried, "why did you come out here?

And such a fearful night; 'tis terrible!

You must go in the house; do, Marian dear;

I cannot bear to see you in this storm."

"Kenneth, if you are here, I will be too.

You're weak and ill; have not slept for two days,

But I am strong, and if it's right for you

To face the bitter lashing of this wind,

I will remain and share your perilous work."

The dark grim headland stood there jutting out,

The fierce north wind beating against its side,

And waters roaring on the shore beneath,

Heard e'en above the wind; the snow still fell,

And over all, the heavy brooding clouds

Hung like the sable wings of some vast bird.

"Marian, I will not stir until you go

Back to the house; I must unto the beach."

"Oh, Kenneth, if you love me, let me come;

I've wronged you greatly; I have never felt

Until to-day, all that I should have done.

But, henceforth, I would share your trials with you,

And try to bless your life as best I can."

There, as the wild storm hurried fiercely by,
They clasped each other; and their souls were linked
By the great thought which both saw clearly now.
"It seems," said Kenneth, "as if life had come
Back to me after death, to hear you breathe
Such loving words. Oh, Marian, great is life!
Great in its hopes, great in its aims, its trials;
But greatest in the power, the light, the love
That springs from sorrow borne with noble strength."
And so to Kenneth, as they stood alone,
A fairer light than had been his ere then,
Had sprung up in the darkness of that night.

When they came home was seen the hazy dawn
With dim grey tint above the pallid veil
That lay on hill and field, on house and road.
Once more the old wild tale of love and joy
With glowing tenderness was heard on earth.
Once more the fancy of a trusting heart
Ran riot through a realm of beauteous hopes,
And pictured all the bliss of years to come.

And for those two, through that dark, heavy day,
'Twas as a dream that passes tremblingly
Through the worn soul, leaving behind a sense
Of something great, divine, beyond the ken
Of any wisdom that this world can grasp.

Some months have passed; the summer light shines
fair

Over the ancient church, where Vicar Lee
For many a year will holy truths instil;
Kenneth and Marian visit the old farm,
Where Mike and Trevor still live cosily;
For a new roof is all the difference seen
In the quaint place from what it was before.
The farmer loves to sit out in the air
And talk to Kenneth; petting Marian, too.
This evening there is Sapworth with his wife;
Dora and Hicky rambling not far off
Through the fair garden with its dew-kissed flowers,
Now looking for the time when they shall dwell
In the white cottage near the roaring mill.

Rachel has gone to stay with Farley now,
His daughter living not far off from them.
Sapworth has just been saying what a name
His friend, young Harcourt, through his pictures, has.
“ I’m going to town to stay with him a bit ;
He has a house, I think, in Grosvenor Square.”
Then Trevor fills his glass and takes a draught,
A good deep draught, of that old ale of his,
Chatting away until the twilight falls.
So leave them—in a dreamy haze like that
Which memory throws o’er those we once have known.















